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Ian Aitken and Sarah Baxter on Labour conference

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# One-party rot

## The sleaze at the heart of Tory Britain

PLUS: Andrew Gamble on John Major's weak leadership
Alexander Cockburn on the Middle East peace deal
Sally Vincent on the sexual revolution; Russia's crisis
Composers en route to Auschwitz; Clinton's health plan

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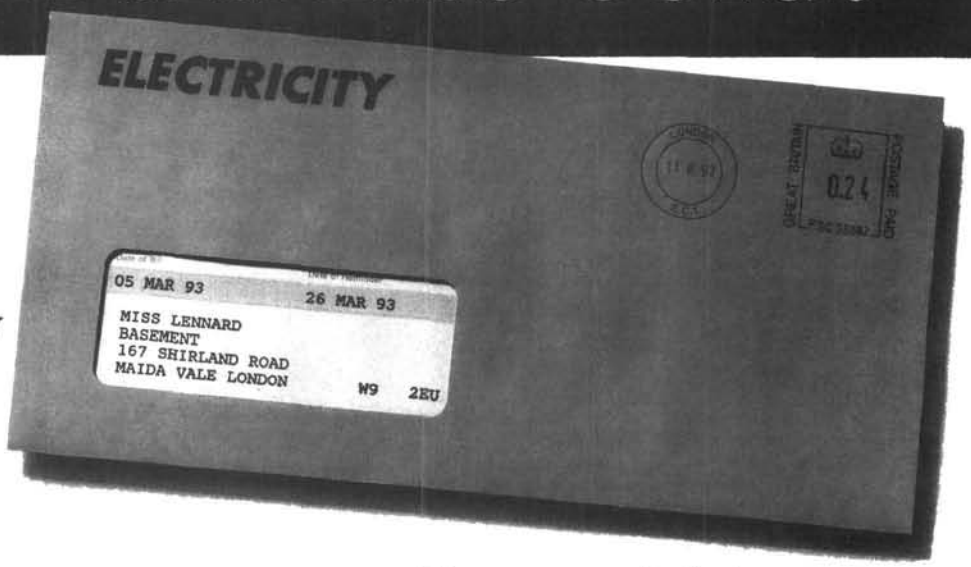


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*Join New Statesman Defence Fund for the best music hall of 1993*

# New Statesman Knees Up

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Forget cricket and enjoy a different kind of top score at our fund-raising music hall night. Individual stars, chorus dancing, fine japes, better food and rib shattering laughter are all guaranteed at Brick Lane Music Hall on October 15. Tickets, at £20 each including a three-course traditional dinner, are limited, so contact Nicola (tel: 071-739 3211) soon.

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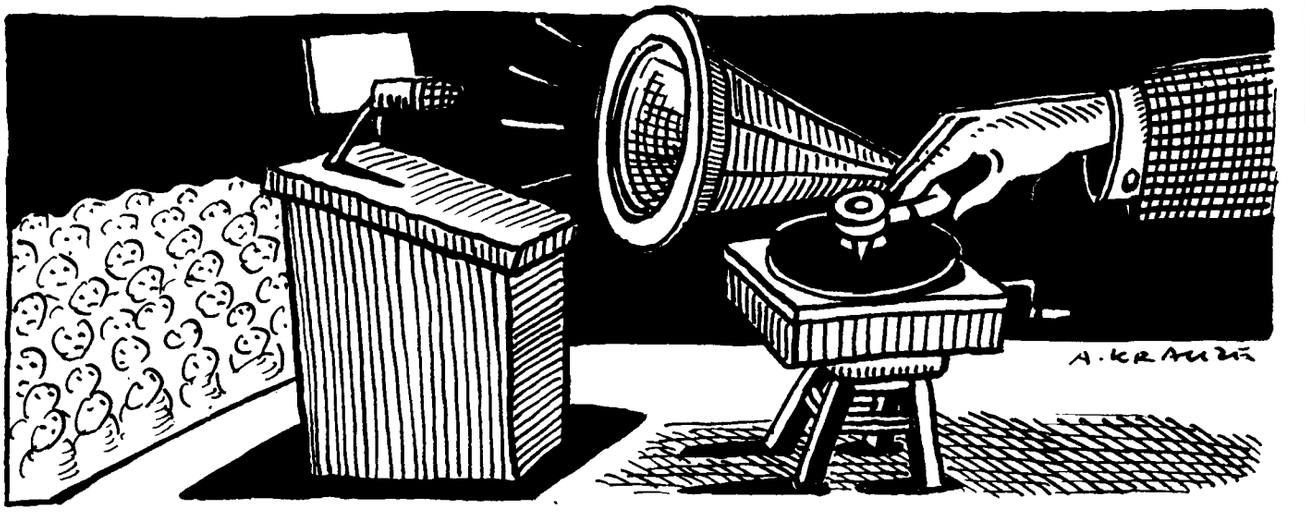


Andrzej Krauze

# One-nation Labourism

John Smith promised on Tuesday to "stop the rot" spread by 14 corrupting years of Conservative rule. The antidote to Tory sleaze was a just and principled Labour government. "I have set out a 'Tale of Two Britains'," he said, but the real inspiration for his speech came not from Charles Dickens, but from a Conservative prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli.

In his novel *Sybil*, Disraeli spoke of the unbridgable gap between two nations—the rich and the poor—in Victorian times. Echoing Disraeli, consciously or not, Smith emphasised that the gap between the two was even wider today.

The government cared more about lining the pockets of its rich friends than the real needs of individuals and families in Britain, he charged. "Labour's choice is to end these double standards." He might just as easily have added that Labour, and not the Conservative Party, was now the guardian of a One-Nation philosophy.

Smith was at times surprisingly witty and scathing, adopting his relaxed House of Commons persona, instead of trying to force himself to be an orator. Previously, he has been uncomfortable giving big set-piece speeches (last year's Labour conference speech was particularly lacklustre), but his confidence seems to have been boosted by the acclaim he received at the TUC conference last month. His performance on Tuesday was reminiscent of the time when he ridiculed John Major's Britain as a nation where the Grand National fails to start and hotels fall into the sea.

He spoke contemptuously of Major—and wisely reserved some scorn for Kenneth Clarke, the Prime Minister's potential successor. Recalling Major's "bastards" slip on ITN, he quoted with relish his peevish complaint that the Thatcherites were "harking back to a golden age that never was". To the long list of Conservative broken promises could be added another charge: Major had lied to the public about the record of those years.

But Smith himself harked back to another "golden age", one that the Tories succeeded in rubbishing so comprehensively in the 1980s. As befits the only person with ministerial experience left in the shadow cabinet (and, now that Tony Benn has gone, on the national executive), Smith defended the achievements of Harold Wilson's and Jim Callaghan's Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s. There was higher economic growth then, he reminded his audience.

He emerged from his speech as the defender of the post-1945 settlement and the Butskellite consensus that held sway until Thatcherism took over in 1979. This was the era in which his politics was formed. He can talk convincingly about "the public good" in a way that no other Labour politician can. Full employment and decent welfare were the mainstays of that period (at least until 1976). So was a sense of public spirit and duty, the reason that the young Smith became a politician.

His support for the Social Chapter, reiterated on Tuesday, is inspired by the same consensus politics. In Europe, the need for minimum rights for workers is accepted equally by Christian Democratic and socialist parties. And he opened his speech by saluting Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, two men who are trying to bury their irreconcilable differences.

The speech was widely welcomed across the political spectrum in Brighton, not least because it provided a welcome break from the obsessive introversion of the argument, unresolved as *New Statesman & Society* went to press, over the procedure for selecting parliamentary candidates.

After all the bad temper and fractiousness of recent months, there is no doubt that Labour needed to be reminded that it is held together by its belief in decency, fairness and social solidarity. And it could even be that Smith's evocation of the kinder, gentler Britain of the sixties and seventies strikes a chord among the wider public: nostalgia for the era of flared trousers, the Beatles, Morris Marinas and George Best might now have cancelled out memories of sterling crises and strikes.

But it is difficult to believe that consensus, reassurance and nostalgia will be enough to win Labour the next election. Younger voters in particular need to be convinced that Labour does not stand merely for a better yesterday—that it has really come to terms with the ways the world has changed in the past 20 years.

To be fair to Smith, he did make an explicit commitment to a radical programme of constitutional reform, and he made it clear that his Labour Britain, unlike Wilson's or Callaghan's, would be fully committed to Europe. But on the biggest constitutional question, the future of the electoral system, he was silent (no doubt in part because he seemed to be heading for a conference defeat on Thursday on his proposals for an electoral reform). And on Europe, he said nothing about how Labour wants the EC to develop. There was nothing on the environment, nothing beyond a ritual endorsement of sexual equality to indicate that Smith has grasped how the family has changed since his golden age.

Perhaps most importantly, for all his rhetoric about full employment, he gave no indication of how Labour would achieve it. (Nor did Gordon Brown earlier in the week, despite a promise that all would be revealed in a pamphlet.)

It is of course unfair to pin too much on one speech; and there is plenty of time before the next election that Labour can use to fill in Smith's silences on Tuesday. The danger, however, is that the need to rebuild trust within the party after the back-stabbing over one member, one vote will so dominate Labour politics over the coming year that the equally pressing need to rethink policy will be forgotten.



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# Bottomley and the London juggernaut

A straggle of nurses and porters went back to work this week, after staging a six-week picket of London's University College hospital. They were protesting not just against ward closures but against a threat to the future of the hospital itself. The local health authority, Camden and Islington, is proposing to switch contracts away from UCH, awarding them instead to north London hospitals that can treat patients more cheaply.

The chill winds of the internal market are beginning to be felt in London. The joint Guy's and St Thomas's trust this week warned of bed closures and job losses to come, as it struggles to stave off a looming deficit. The grim fact is that famous teaching hospitals, supporting expensive research programmes, cannot price treatments as cheaply as humbler establishments outside central London. Health authorities, which are now responsible for buying health care on behalf of local populations, feel they have a duty to get the best deal going. The result? Low morale, bed closures and job losses in some hospitals; expansion and optimism in others.

People get very emotional about London hospitals, and powerful lobbies are deployed on their behalf. History is invoked, alumni canvassed. Grateful MPs remember life-saving treatment at St Thomas's, while the City owes a collective debt to Barts' accident and emergency department. But the juggernaut looks inexorable. Even Barts seems unlikely to survive, despite a fervent campaign by the *Evening Standard*. UCH (which even its supporters describe as "redbrick rather than Oxbridge") cannot command quite such lofty allegiances.

The Secretary of State for Health must be wishing she had never ventured into the minefield of London's health care. At first she looked bold and ruthless, iconoclastically declaring that it was not her job to save old buildings. But her attitude has since become somewhat confused.

Professor Bernard Tomlinson was brought in to act as both axeman and seer—forecasting the future health needs of Londoners on the one hand, recommending unpalatable mergers and closures on the other. But while Bottomley waits to act on Sir Bernard's report, the grass is growing under her feet, and the hard choices of health authorities are making themselves felt *de facto*. UCH, it should be noted, did not feature on Sir Bernard's hit-list.

Bottomley must decide which way to jump. Either she wants London's health care to be planned (the logic of the Tomlinson approach), or she wants the free market to take its course, as her present laissez-faire attitude implies. This uncertainty may reflect pressures on Bottomley in cabinet. Her "drier" colleagues feel there is still far too much bureaucracy in the NHS, and want regional health authorities to be slimmed down drastically or even abolished. There has also been talk of turning the NHS into a free-standing "Next Steps" agency. Bottomley commissioned an inquiry on NHS reorganisation, but is still sitting on the results.

The Health Secretary's own instincts are said to be in favour of regulation—in which case she should stick to her guns and resist the temptation to pander to the right, either at next week's party conference or thereafter. The NHS is in danger of plunging into market-led chaos. Health care needs planning, both locally and centrally.

The response from Bottomley's critics, not least those on the Labour front benches, has been either parochial, focusing on individual hospitals, or doom-laden, forecasting comprehensive disaster. But it is possible to find perfectly progressive people who agree that London is overbedded in comparison with other cities: who would support, for example, the closure of Barts. They would agree that the priority should be to develop London's primitive GP and primary care services. If Bottomley can hold the Thatcherites at bay, she may yet be able to forge an alliance in support of a rational plan for looking after Londoners.

## FELIX BENNETT

John Major's speech at the Tory party conference will be "virtually off the cuff," like many of his recent remarks.
You lot are barmy....
...and you lot are bastards!
hurrah!
brilliant speech
inspired



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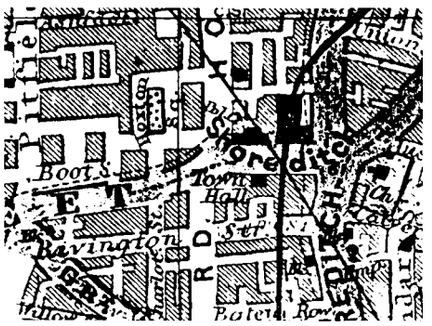


**Labour education spokesperson Ann Taylor is fast emerging as the shadow cabinet member most likely to lose his or her seat in next month's elections. She even seems to have lost the confidence of the Labour leadership. When she presented a discussion paper to a pre-conference meeting of the National Executive Committee, John Smith attacked her contribution with a ferocity that surprised everybody present—telling her, as if she were a naughty schoolchild, to go away and not come back until she had produced something better. Insiders are putting Taylor down for a minor Treasury spokesperson's job . . .**

Shoreditch has the following on good authority. A distinguished former union grandee approached John Prescott on Sunday and assured him that he would top the poll in the elections for the seven constituency representatives on the NEC. When the people's champion modestly demurred, saying he thought Harriet Harman would be the winner, his companion growled: "I mean the real election. The one for men." In fact, both were wrong: David Blunkett topped the poll, Harman came second, Neil Kinnock was third, and Robin Cook was fourth, with Prescott close behind in fifth.

**Sixth and seventh places in the NEC election went to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown respectively—which will make next year's competition for NEC seats a particularly nerve-racking one for Labour's most senior "modernisers". In 1994, it will be compulsory for everyone to vote for at least two women in the NEC constituency poll (this year everyone had to vote for just one), which means that at least one male incumbent must lose his place. The hot favourite to become second woman, incidentally, is Mo Mowlam.**

Of course, the big loser this year was Tony Benn, kicked off the NEC after 34 years. Something tells Shoreditch that he was expecting to go. He was spotted in the boardroom at Labour's Walworth Road headquarters last week taking snapshots of the furniture and the pictures on the walls, presumably to add to his vast personal archive.

**Campaigners for Amnesty International have been having a trying week. The human-rights organisation printed 18 kilos' worth of special Labour conference newsletters, and arranged to have them delivered in advance to Brighton's Acropolis hotel. But when the Amnesty delegation arrived on Monday, the 18 kilos of important reading matter was nowhere to be seen. It was on its way to the real Acropolis, having been forwarded to Athens with a consignment of luggage belonging to a party of Greek tourists.**

Shoreditch hears that the London Labour Party is in the doghouse. A planned November bash to launch the results of its policy forum for the capital has been cancelled because the comrades came up with the bright idea of abolishing mortgage tax relief and replacing it with some other sort of mortgage benefit. The party leadership went nuclear and demanded that the offending document be pulped. But one sheepish NEC member told its authors: "Of course you're right, and of course we all agree—it's just that we can't say so."

**Away from the smoke-filled rooms, this year's conference saw the first match of the Red Menace Football League. This inaugural fixture, held at Brighton Rugby Club, was a battle between House of Commons researchers and Westminster political correspondents. The final result: Researchers 4, Lobby 2. One of those who scored was Tony Blair's researcher Tim Allen—but, for some strange reason, Allen was playing on the correspondents' side. Labour traditionalists watching from the touchline were shaking their heads at yet another example of the modernising Blair's treacherous and excessive media-friendliness.**

Regretfully, Shoreditch must leave the glamorous round of lager, fish and chips and soundbites and return to Real Life—or rather the problems of trans-European publishing—courtesy of an item in the *Bookseller*.

Pavilion Books, a children's publisher, has received a desperate letter from Lisbon, where a Portuguese translator has been grappling with one of their children's titles (*Fantastic Stories*, by ex-Python Terry Jones). The letter reads: "On the last page of the story "Tom and the Dinosaur", the last word is SURBITON. Could you please tell us if this is the name of anything that really exists, or if the sound of the word is significant, and in that case what does the author mean by it? Or is it just an invented word with no special meaning?"

Pavilion's foreign-rights director, Pamela Webb, was able to reassure her anxious correspondent that Surbiton was no invention, but "a particularly boring place just south of London". What proved more difficult was finding a Portuguese equivalent. "We took out a map and chose a little town near Lisbon called Barreira," Webb explains. "But I'm not at all sure it will register the same response as Surbiton."

# FOURTH ESTATE

*A regular monitor of the tabloid press*

**24 September:** "Gutted. Stitched up. Sick as a parrot." That's how the *Star* feels about Manchester losing the Olympics. It has a medal of its own to award: to Sydney, for "synchronised smarming".

The Pope receives an unexpected vote of confidence from the *Sun*, which appreciates his plain speaking on the iniquities of homosexuality, birth control, and pre-marital sex. "At least here's one Christian leader who knows what he believes and says what he means. Unlike the agnostics, atheists, and wimps who run the Church of England."

**25 September:** A *Mail* editorial accuses firemen of demanding "special favours" by defying the government's public-sector pay squeeze. "Millions of unemployed can only look with envy at firemen who have enjoyed job security and earnings linked to those of the top 25 per cent of skilled manual workers through two harsh recessions," it sniffs.

**26 September:** The *Sunday Express* takes the public temperature after the Millwall by-election—and finds that 36 per cent of those polled support the repatriation of immigrants.

**27 September:** The *Sun* reports "sensational rumours" that members of the Tory high command are plotting to dump their leader. Kenneth Clarke and Norman Fowler have apparently done a secret deal to oust the hapless premier after the Euro-elections in June. If Major goes, adds the *Sun*, Employment Secretary David Hunt is ready to run for the leadership—splitting the "wet" vote that would otherwise go to Clarke.

As for Her Majesty's loyal opposition, the *Sun* is tart in its criticism. "You don't have to watch *Jurassic Park* to see what dinosaurs look like. There are whole herds of them on display at Labour's conference." The *Mail* recycles a golden oldie: "Labour's tax somersault." Gordon Brown, it says, has threatened "big income tax rises" for the middle classes—"a retreat to the old 'soak-the-rich' strategy". The *Mail* identifies this as a gesture of appeasement, designed to pacify angry unions and a furious "old guard".

**28 September:** Those Labour splits in full. "Beckett stabs Smith in back on voting reforms", blasts the *Express* front page. Inside, the paper dissects the Labour leader's "women problems". There are harsh words for shadow education secretary Ann Taylor ("the killer instinct of a sedated butterfly"); Treasury tyro Harriet Harman ("a disaster"); and heritage spokesperson Ann Clywd ("a shadow of a shadow"). The only woman to come out smelling of roses is conference debutante Glenys Kinnock—whose speech revealed oratorical skills that her husband "would have been proud to display".

**29 September:** No one is very interested in Smith's big speech, which the *Star* dismisses as "all froth". It's Kenneth Clarke's "plan to clobber shoppers" that worries the *Sun* . . .



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## **Sean French** wallows in Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech

**In the aftermath of the British National Party's victory in the Isle of Dogs, baffling and disturbing in all its complication, I turned to the text that could be said, without too much exaggeration, to have started it all.** Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech is handily reproduced in Brian MacArthur's *Penguin Book of Twentieth-Century Speeches,* just published in paperback.

Incidentally, this is both a compelling and, at times, instructively disappointing collection. Some of the speeches remain appallingly impressive, others seem absurd and trivial, now that their moment has gone. Geoffrey Howe's resignation speech, which precipitated Margaret Thatcher's departure, is particularly unimpressive read today in the cold light of Majorism, though it is not helped by MacArthur's omission of Howe's only joke, which I quote from memory: "Indeed, if one believes the reports of some of my fellow ministers, I am the first minister in history to resign for being in complete agreement with government policy."

Re-reading Enoch Powell's speech from beginning to end, what I was most struck by was its nullity, its paranoid obliquity, as if blanks had to be left, which listeners would fill with their own racism while the speaker scurries away. Over and over again Powell talks of the disaster facing the country, about the madness that has overtaken it as a result of immigration, but he persistently refrains from saying why. And while not saying what he is saying, he notes that: "People are disposed to mistake predicting troubles for causing troubles and even for desiring troubles." Methinks he doth protest too much. It's the old Oswald Mosley tactic: stir up, provoke, then disclaim responsibility for what happens without actually condemning it.

The specifics in the speech are equally bizarre, and chillingly reminiscent of the Isle of Dogs campaign. Powell claims to speak not for himself but, almost against his will, on behalf of the ordinary English men who "found their wives unable to obtain hospital beds in childbirth, their children unable to obtain school places, their homes and neighbourhoods changed beyond recognition, their plans and prospects for the future defeated; at work they found that employers hesitated to apply to the immigrant worker the standards of discipline and competence required of the native-born worker; they began to hear, as time went by, more and more voices which told them that they were now the unwanted."

Notice the loony, yet canny, escalation of the charges. Are you on an NHS waiting list? Has your child not got into the primary school of your first choice? Failing that, are there some changes in your neighbourhood of which you disapprove? Do you sometimes get a bit depressed about your career or, indeed, anything else? Do you ever hear strange voices talking to you? Well, it's the fault of those immigrants, isn't it?

The charges now seem almost as much comic as sinister. Twenty-five years on, would anybody argue that the Asian community has drawn disproportionately on the NHS? In fact, NHS workers have had to go out into the Asian community, so reluctant have many Asians, especially Asian women, been, to draw on services to which they are entitled. If you scrutinise our university intake, is it dominated by the Afro-Caribbeans who were, according to Powell, being systematically favoured? Do the unemployment statistics support the view that the blacks have got all the jobs?

**Perhaps less noticeable in 1968 was the fact that Powell's appeal was on behalf of an emasculated working-class white man, bent on protecting his wife and his children, a patriarchal system that has been shaken by his own party's strategic removal of the country's industrial base.**

The East End dockers famously marched in support of Powell protesting against Ted Heath who, with his usual self-destructive disdain of easy popularity (Mrs Thatcher would not repeat his mistake), had sacked Powell. Now the dockers themselves have been sacked and the East End docks no longer exist. Even Enoch Powell would have had trouble pinning the blame for that on the immigrants. Did anybody call for a proto-fascist party based on a hatred of container ships? Do gangs of crop-headed youths prowl the East End in search of TNT drivers to do over? No, and I've little doubt that some of those dockers' children were once again marching deludedly for the BNP.

Powell's speech was unsuccessful inasmuch as it failed to initiate a policy of sending them back home, though where "home" precisely was for the Kenyan Asians who were the pretext for Powell's speech, or African West Indians, or a Protestant Irish Swede such as myself, was never made clear.

But the speech was triumphantly successful in the way that it turned people who had a common cause against each other. What would have happened if, on 20 April 1968, a politician of the left had stood up at Birmingham Town Hall and made a similarly effective speech, arguing that the despised working class and the despised immigrants shared interests and faced common enemies, that pressures on the welfare state and the first stirrings of unemployment were a matter of structural failures? In that revolutionary year, one can only speculate on what might have happened. And of course nobody remembers the speech made two years earlier by that most endearingly non-demagogic of politicians, Roy Jenkins, in which he hailed the benefits of immigration and set up the Race Relations Board.

Even the bit of Powell's speech that gets in all the quotation books is disingenuous and obfuscatory: "As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'." The line comes from a prophecy made to Aeneas in the *Aeneid*. Powell omitted to mention that Aeneas was an illegal immigrant, a refugee from Troy landing in Italy, which he would later occupy with bloody battles. Incidentally, it was not the Roman—that is, Virgil—who made this prophecy, but a Sibyl. Virgil would have felt quite the opposite of foreboding since Aeneid's incursion ultimately resulted in the founding of Rome. If Enoch Powell had been in control, the authorities would have deported Aeneas (doubtless making use of a new, safe stranglehold) back to the smoking ruins of Troy, Rome would never have been founded and Enoch Powell would have to have used another quotation to bolster up his argument.

It is, I suppose, an irony that Powell's most famous statement was lifted from one of the great epics celebrating immigration. It would have been more appropriate for Roy Jenkins' benevolent speech, "the River Tiber foaming with much claret".

**Still, eccentricity is not confined to racists. A friend of mine was mugged last week in Hackney by a young black man.** She was physically assaulted, but the challenge to her liberal principles was even more traumatic, and in a fit of anti-racist zeal, the description of the man she gave to the police was accurate in every detail except that she said he was white instead of black. My initial thought was that the real ethical problem would come when the police arrested and extracted a confession from a white man answering her description. But apparently the police told her that they had no white people on file, and so there was no chance of catching anybody. It seems like a subject almost worthy of an allegorical painting: blind justice caught between the Scylla of liberal insanity and the Charybdis of institutional racism.

My friend was dragged along a crowded street as the man struggled to free her bag from her shoulder, and nobody made any attempt to aid her. It may have been that the bystanders were cowards pretending that nothing was happening. On the other hand, they may all have been liberals like herself who were viewing the episode with a troubled complicated sense that maybe the young man had a point, albeit expressed with an arguably regrettable lack of tact.



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# The incredible journey

Nothing so accurately betrays the lofty and patronising attitude of true Euro-fanatics towards those who do not share their enthusiasm than their reaction to Peter Shore. Never mind that he is an intellectual giant who towers over most of the people who sit in front of him on Labour's front bench. Never mind that he is one of the few remaining Labour MPs with top-level cabinet experience. He can be, and is, dismissed as an irrelevance because he has perversely refused to climb aboard Labour's belated European bandwagon.

This, to be sure, has defined the behaviour of true devotees of the European ideal from the earliest days. Even Hugh Gaitskell was subjected to the same treatment in the closing months of his life. Indeed, since Gaitskellites were the hardcore of pro-Europeanism in the Labour Party at that time, Gaitskell's adoption of the opposite cause outraged many of his closest friends. Even Bill Rodgers refused to join the standing ovation for his leader's conference speech in 1962.

Of course, there are other problems about Shore, besides this. When Neil Kinnock was performing his unproclaimed transition from anti- to pro-Europeanism it was obvious that Shore's presence at the shadow cabinet table would be an embarrassment. Moreover, there was the additional problem of his continuing belief in Keynesian interventionism at a time when John Smith and Gordon Brown were abandoning such things in favour of so-called "supply-side" policies.

But perhaps the most embarrassing aspect of Shore's status as Banquo's ghost on the Labour back benches is the curious way in which his political status has changed. Until quite recently, he was seen as a stern right-winger, largely because of his opposition to unilateralism and his stand against Tony Benn. Suddenly, he has emerged as a left-wing figure, strongly committed to a restoration of Labour's belief in full-employment economic policies.

But what makes this doubly embarrassing for many erstwhile left-wingers in the Kinnock and Smith shadow cabinets, is that Shore has made his epic journey from right to left without moving even a toe muscle. He remains rooted to much the same ideological territory he has occupied ever since he was a deeply discontented and leftish head of research under Gaitskell. It is the party that has moved round him, not the other way round.

So it isn't open to party loyalists to dismiss Shore's criticism of Kinnock and Smith (published in his new book on eight former Labour leaders, *Leading the Left*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £17.99) as the whingeing of a disgruntled and outdated anti-marketeer. The views he expresses are those of the traditional non-Marxist, pro-Keynesian Wilsonian Labour party that—never forget it—once used to win elections. He deserves to be listened to with respect.

True, the centrepiece of Shore's critique of Kinnock and Smith is that their adherence to European union, and particularly to European monetary union, has deprived them of any opportunity to espouse an independent economic policy for Britain, whether Keynesian or monetarist. But this is no more than the reality as demonstrated by the debacle associated with our entry into, and departure from, the European exchange rate mechanism.

Indeed, Shore concedes that if Smith is right to believe that the only way in which collectivist economic policies can be pursued is through the European Community, then there literally is neither need for, nor point in, any other economic policy. With monetary management in the hands of an independent European central bank and the rest of economic policy in the hands of the Brussels Commission, no British government will have more than residual powers of intervention in our economy.

**Shore wants the union share of the conference vote to be cut to a half, and the job of picking leaders returned to MPs**

In other words, all hope of achieving an economic regime aimed at restoring full employment in this country—hitherto Labour's basic objective—will hang on Smith's ability to build a consensus along those lines among the rest of the 12. Shore leaves little doubt that he regards this as problematical in a community dominated by free-market ideology and Bundesbank monetary puritanism.

These are legitimate criticisms, and are stated by Shore with an admirable absence of the vituperation and abuse that has characterised too much of Labour's policy debate in the past. But they have scarcely been addressed by the party's economic spokespersons until this week. Most serious of all, there has been virtually no statement to explain why and how the party was shifted from profound Euro-scepticism to its present posture as the most European party of them all.

Even more remarkable is the fact that Kinnock achieved this transformation with so little debate or discussion inside the party, as Shore records. It is a feat worthy of the Great Illusionist himself, for Harold Wilson pulled off much the same trick during his premiership. But even he needed the assistance of Tony Benn and his referendum.

Only in passing does Shore mention the fact that he harboured quite legitimate ambitions to lead the Labour Party himself, and that he stood for the job twice. On the first occasion, he was widely seen as the left's candidate against Denis Healey in the race to succeed Jim Callaghan, and it remains possible that he would have won. What dished him was the fact that a number of TUC leaders decided that Michael Foot had a better chance of beating Healey, and persuaded him to stand.

It is fascinating, though wholly profitless, to speculate about what might have happened if Shore instead of Foot had led Labour into the 1983 general election. But in the circumstances, he is generous in his assessment of his old friend's leadership, and endorses the view that he probably wouldn't have beaten Healey anyway.

But the central theme of Shore's book is not about the comparative merits of the eight leaders he examines. His specific purpose in writing the book was, he says, to examine the nature of the job itself as well as the success with which its various occupants filled it.

His theme is therefore relevant to the controversy that has dominated this week's party conference in Brighton. For he points out that the unique problem facing all Labour leaders (as opposed to Tory or Liberal leaders) stems directly from the importance of the conference as Labour's policy-making body, and the overwhelming weight given to the unions in its decisions. As a result, Labour leaders constantly face the possibility that they may have policies foisted on them that they don't support.

This might well have turned Shore into a formidable ally of Smith this week. But Shore remains convinced that what matters is not so much the union role in picking parliamentary candidates—which he does not regard as particularly significant—as their role in the conference, in the executive and in the electoral college that chooses party leaders. He believes the union share of the conference vote should be cut to a half, that union representation on the executive should be reduced, and that the job of picking party leaders should be returned to the MPs who have to sustain him.

Shore ends his book by remarking that such changes won't be easy. Smith could at least say amen to that.



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# Clinton's health plan

**In outline, the health plan bolted together by Hillary Clinton and an economic consultant named Ira Magaziner is not surprising.** Health consumers will be mustered into Health Maintenance Organisations offering a basic "standard package" of health care. The insurance will be acquired by clubs of these consumers—health alliances—who will bargain for the best coverage available. Market magic will rule.

Meanwhile, businesses with fewer than 5,000 workers on the payroll will be required to provide insurance for their employees, paying 80 per cent of the average premium, with employees paying the remainder. The big corporations will continue with pre-existing health coverage. The self-employed will have to pay for themselves, which will cost more that $4,000 a year, a sum that they will be able to write off their taxes. Those below 150 per cent of the poverty line will get subsidies from government.

It is clear that many of the 37 million Americans now underinsured or uninsured will stay clear of the prospective system, by getting by until illness reaches a catastrophic (and much more expensive) stage, and then, as they do now, make their way to hospital emergency rooms, where the government foots the bill.

It is unclear, however, how those with catastrophic illness will fare, since the whole incentive of health maintenance organisations and the insurer standing behind them is to avoid the chronically and expensively afflicted.

The sour joke is that Americans, who have always fled anything resembling national health insurance on the grounds that this means socialism and the chains of the totalitarian state, may now end up with a system notable for its duress and lack of choice.

Writing in the *Village Voice* last week Jim Ridgeway aptly quoted William Glaser writing recently in the *Lancet*: "HMOs were invented not by Americans but by Europeans; they are not new but were the most common way of organising health insurance a century ago." But "because the public opposes lock-ins, subsequent national health insurance laws have guaranteed that every insured person can consult any doctor or hospital . . . HMOs cannot survive under national health insurance laws. They endure only in the United States which alone lacks the national health insurance laws that guarantee choices by patients and doctors."

In fact, the notion of the "standard package" is the very quintessence of totalitarian rationality. Patients are permitted to inhabit a "health envelope" that has to fit into the HMO's postbox of tolerated affliction, as deemed tolerable by the HMO's insurer.

About 14 per cent of the gross national product now goes to health care. Americans spend $2,566 annually for each person, as against the UK's £972. Will the plan reduce overall cost? One probably reliable estimate is that costs will increase by $20 billion to $30 billion a year, possibly financed by cigarette taxes and by the contributions of small businesses. The administration also hopes to get $240 billion in cuts out of Medicare and Medicaid, the existing publicly financed health programmes assisting the old and the indigent.

Regulation of this enormously complex structure appears to be virtually non-existent. What seems likely to happen is that a few big insurance companies will control the system, both by underwriting providers in the HMOs and by covering the health consumers using them. There will be no global national health budget.

True to the essential police instincts of the neo-liberal corporate state, there is also a plan to issue each individual with a national health ID card, which will mesh into the existing computer networks providing overall invigilation by government.

The Republicans have offered a counter plan that in most aspects is identical to the Clinton model, which tells one clearly how little of an affront to the American insurance industry this grostesque scheme actually is. From the very start, Clinton avoided any single-payer model of the Canadian type, precisely because he did not wish to offend the insurance giants who already control much of American daily life.

Will the plan clear Congress? The interest groups representing small businesses, not to mention Medicaid, are very strong. So, too, is the American Medical Association representing doctors. In the end, it is virtually impossible to imagine employers in small businesses being required to offer coverage. The Republicans will also chisel away at such items as drug benefits and federal subsidies for the poor.

With any luck, the package will fall apart, and the coalition pressing for single-payer national health insurance will pick up the pieces, proably starting at the state level, as happened with social security in the 1930s before the New Deal national programme kicked in. The "managed care" will be the epitaph for an administration that has neither the savvy, the will nor indeed the intention of confronting powerful corporate interests.

**Alexander Cockburn**

## 20 YEARS AGO

**"The myth of the leftward lurch"**
**5 October 1973**

*Alan Watkins writes in the New Statesman on the 1973 Labour Party conference*

**The Labour Party is now like a respectable middle-aged lady pretending to be rather more adventurous in her habits than she really is. At the slightest hint of trouble at home, one suspects, the play-acting will stop and the domestic virtues reassert themselves. Only twice this week, as far as I know, did anyone raise the question of what a Labour government would do if confronted by a sterling crisis such as that of 1964—or 1966 or 1967, for that matter.**

**The delegate from Brighton Kemptown did briefly mention the possibility and concluded with passion, if not with logic, that the solution lay in nationalising everything in sight, and Mr Anthony Crosland, at a Fabian tea meeting, said somewhat airily that the economic failure of the last Labour government was due to a refusal to devalue in 1964. Yet was it as simple as that? Would it be as simple next time? Would a Labour government, in fact, have a fixed parity at all? Where does Mr Healey stand, or straddle, on these questions? He does not tell us, and nor does anyone else. . .**

**A Labour government, we should know by now, is peculiarly vulnerable to international pressure. Yet in making its plans the party persists in working to a closed national economic model. So much can be raised in tax, so much in economic growth, our programme has been costed on the most up-to-date computer available, all is ready. And the whole elaborately constructed edifice can be blown to pieces in a matter of weeks.**

# Chirac forced to climb down

**It never seemed much of a contest: a group of 23 mostly African families tossed out of their latest squat in Paris, clamouring for justice from a conservative city government, unflinching in its determination to crack down on immigration and vagrancy.** Given France's prevailing atmosphere of hostility to all things foreign, it seemed the families didn't stand a chance. And yet so manifest was the injustice dealt to them that even Jacques Chirac, Paris' usually unflappable mayor, was forced to back down.

The families moved into the squat, a disused orphanage in the Avenue René Coty in Paris' 14th arrondissement, back in March, with the support of various civil rights groups and anti-homelessness campaigners. The city government did not even wait for the result of a court hearing on their fate: at the end of August, 500 riot police swooped on the building at dawn, threw out the 67 occupants and boarded up all the doors and windows.

Three weeks later, the Paris appeals court ruled that the families should not have been expelled, but were entitled to stay in the building for six more months while they



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## NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

looked for more permanent accommodation.

The authorities paid no attention: the police proceeded to rip out the inside of the building, making it uninhabitable, while on the outer wall the city erected a shiny new sign announcing that a new 24-hour creche would open on the site sometime next year. The families, joined by several support groups including the Roman Catholic church, which was offering them temporary shelter, staged nightly demonstrations on the pavement opposite; the police broke up one of the protests with a flurry of baton blows that injured two adults and three children, one of them three years old.

The families seemed ineluctably caught between numerous political interests, not least the French government's determination to please its disgruntled middle-class electorate by taking a tough line of immigrants. France's hardline interior minister Charles Pasqua has battled the constitutional court to push through a package increasing police powers of expulsion and limiting immigrants' rights to marry and bring their families to France. This week, the government said it would change the constitution if necessary, to tighten the rules on accepting refugees for asylum.

The families were also caught in the crossfire of a power-struggle between Chirac and Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, currently in competition for the conservative 1995 presidential nomination; Chirac seemed to think he could attract favourable attention by picking on an easy target.

If that was his tactic, it backfired miserably. The fate of the squatter families only drew attention to the capital's chronic housing problems and the manifest reluctance of the Chirac administration to tackle them head on. Up to 60,000 people are estimated to be inadequately housed in central Paris alone, and yet more than 100,000 properties are currently vacant.

Chirac's policy, far from creating a new pool of low-cost housing, has been to pull down tenement blocks within the inner city limits, and replace them with smart blocks of flats for middle-class families. As a result, the working classes, the unemployed and the disenfranchised have been forced to flee to the suburbs or else to wander miserably from squat to squat. Charity organisations pay for some of the homeless to stay in hostels, but their means scarcely match up to the scale of the problem.

The saviour of the families in the Avenue René Coty turned out to be none other than France's most prominent defender of the poor, the octogenarian Catholic priest Abbé Pierre. He turned up at the building last Friday and vowed to stay there for as long as it took until police let him in. The frail old man sat down and waited, covered in blankets to protect himself from the encroaching autumn chill. Finally, after four hours, one of Chirac's senior aides arrived and accompanied the Abbé to a meeting at the prime minister's office. A deal was struck, and the city agreed to house the families free of charge until they found a durable alternative.

**Andrew Gumbel**

## LETTER FROM BELFAST

**In Northern Ireland, we are being told that peace may be imminent, and we don't know whether or not to believe it.** If anything, the IRA bombing campaign has intensified since the joint announcement last Saturday, by SDLP leader John Hume and Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams, that they had made progresss in their six-month-long secret talks.

The announcement was timed, it seems, to make the least possible impression in the media. Hume had given no indication of progress in an interview on Saturday afternoon, and was on his way to the United States before the announcement had sunk in.

Hume has been accused by some Unionists and loyalist paramilitaries of trying to forge a "pan-nationalist front". The phrase is emotionally charged, because it has been used to rationalise violent attacks by loyalists on SDLP members. Unionist politicians who use the phrase are accused of insensitivity, and of encouraging these attacks. Those Unionists do not see Hume as a peacemaker, but as a nationalist consolidator.

Last Saturday's statement clearly indicates that Hume feels he has found a way of bringing Sinn Fein into political talks, probably centred in Dublin and convened by the Irish government. A necessary condition of that would inevitably be a declaration of an end to the IRA campaign.

**While the IRA have been dropping bombs in town centres, Sinn Fein has been dropping hints of interest in compromise**

Five years ago, Hume tried to guide the Sinn Fein leaders through the logic of their own rhetoric about self-determination, towards an admission that the Irish people were divided. What was on offer at the time was a round-table conference of all parties, including Sinn Fein, convened in Dublin, on the understanding that all IRA violence would have ended. No one yet knows yet whether the dialogue is still fixated on the theology of self-determination, or whether it has come to focus on practical arrangements. The Unionist fear, as one party member put it, is that Hume was sent to the IRA to see if they would settle for a joint authority arrangement over Northern Ireland by the British and Irish governments.

For now, Unionists are talking up their confidence that their relationship with John Major's government will block this prospect and head off any initiative from a new nationalist coalition, operating in the euphoria of an IRA stand-down. The Ulster Unionists helped Major out on the Maastricht vote, and have committed themselves to voting with his government for the duration of this parliament. In return, they expect not to be sold down the river.

It is not only Unionists who are squeamish about the SDLP effectively coming to terms with the IRA. The West Belfast MP, Joe Hendron, is an SDLP member who fought hard to take the seat from Adams. While he was supporting the party's local government candidates against Sinn Fein in April, his party leader was holding secret talks with the Sinn Fein president.

An equivalent would be Paddy Ashdown meeting with the head of the BNP in the middle of the campaign for the Millwall seat. Hendron said just two weeks ago that his party leader had undermined his position. Two days after that, he withdrew all his criticism of Hume, and by the end of that week Hume had announced that progress had been made.

Hendron says that he still doesn't know what the Hume-Adams understanding is, but maintains that he is motivated by a great confidence in his party leader. There is no question, he insists, of selling out to the Unionists, since their agreement would be needed for any final settlement.

He says: "I am told that Gerry Adams speaks for the IRA and that peace is around the corner. I certainly put a lot of trust in John Hume."

Whether peace is around the corner depends partly on whether the IRA can be trusted not to be simply manipulating Hume. What galls many who support Hume is that the IRA was able to call a week-long, unannounced ceasefire last month to impress a US delegation, but didn't see fit to hold fire at all to help save Hume's face.

Over the past three years, while the IRA has been planting enormous bombs in town centres, Sinn Fein has been dropping progressively more intriguing hints of its interest in a compromise settlement.

This is like a good cop/bad cop strategy learnt in the interrogation centres. What it means is anybody's guess. Hume's guess is that is suggests amenability. Sinn Fein has been insisting for years now that it is a separate organisation from the IRA, and claims that even the British government acknowledges this. Hendron has no faith in this distinction. Indeed, there would be little point in Hume talking to Adams if he couldn't deliver the IRA.

He thinks, though, that the republican leadership might want escape routes. After 25 years of violence that has taken its toll on them too, maybe they want an opportunity to stop. Maybe. "There are discussions between two people. The rest of us are not involved. I trust my leader." Hendron has invested a huge personal risk in that trust. His home has been bombed twice in recent weeks by loyalists who link him to the Hume-Adams talks.

If he finds it a painful irony that his life is on the line for a deal he does not understand, then he's not saying so.

**Malachi O'Doherty**



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The Tory conference sees John Major still tied to the poisoned Thatcherite legacy, yet too weak to set new directions. **Andrew Gamble** reports on a party in turmoil

# In government, but not in power

Last year's Tory conference was intended to be a celebration of the fourth consecutive Conservative victory, which had been won by John Major against the odds and certainly against the opinion polls. But the events of Black Wednesday gave the party's Euro-rebels the opportunity to turn that conference into an attack on the government's commitment to the Maastricht treaty.

Norman Fowler soothingly assured the media before the conference that there would be no open dissent and that the party would unite and pull together. Norman Tebbit soon punctured that. His denunciation of the government's European policy exposed the full extent of the division that had opened up in Conservative ranks.

For the past year, the party has been plunged into turmoil. Very little has gone right, either for John Major or for his ministers.They have stumbled from one fiasco to another, and support for the government and for Major personally has plummeted. Loyalists insist that there is nothing remarkable about government unpopularity at this stage of the electoral cycle, and they remind the media ad nauseam that anyway the polls were wrong in 1992. But this misses the point. No government since polling began, not even Anthony Eden's in 1955 or Harold Wilson's in 1966, suffered such an immediate and precipitate collapse of support as the Conservatives have experienced under Major. They have seen their support almost halved, and have suffered by-election defeats at Newbury and Christchurch and sweeping losses in the local government elections in May. These setbacks are extraordinary for a government that so recently won a renewed national mandate.

Even the fall in the standing of the government, however, has been eclipsed by the fall in Major's own standing. His personal popularity was seen as one of the unqualified assets that the Conservatives had in the 1992 general election. He was projected as a quiet, unassuming, likeable, modest person who was not really like a politician at all. His approval rating ran far ahead of that of his party, and far ahead of Neil Kinnock's. The victory when it came was seen as his.

Yet, 18 months after that triumph, Major has endured a year in which his popularity has fallen faster than that of his party. He has taken over from Thatcher as the most unpopular prime minister since polling began.

Even at the height of her power, Thatcher was never a popular leader, so her periods of unpopularity could be discounted. Her ratings for competence and strong leadership were unaffected. Unpopularity for Major is more serious, because his low scores are not primarily because people have changed their views of his personality, but because they think he is incompetent and has no sense of where he is going.

**No government, since polling began, has suffered such a precipitate collapse of support as this one**

Why has this happened? One explanation is the way in which he has been treated by the Conservative newspapers. Even in her darkest days, Thatcher could count on their sympathy and support. They have turned on Major with a ferocity that is bewildering.

When the *Sun* finds it natural to publish a picture of Major next to one of Red Rum and invite readers to phone in their votes as to who would make the best prime minister, something significant has changed. In the past year, the Tory newspapers have begun to treat Major as they are accustomed to treat Labour leaders, with malice and contempt.

No Conservative prime minister has had to face the sustained pressure to which Major has been subjected. It is hardly surprising that he has become increasingly exasperated and liable to explode at his tormentors. There have been some extraordinary scenes. In Japan during Major's recent trip, British journalists astonished the Japanese by swamping the joint press conference held by Major and Hosakawa with questions about Major's leadership.

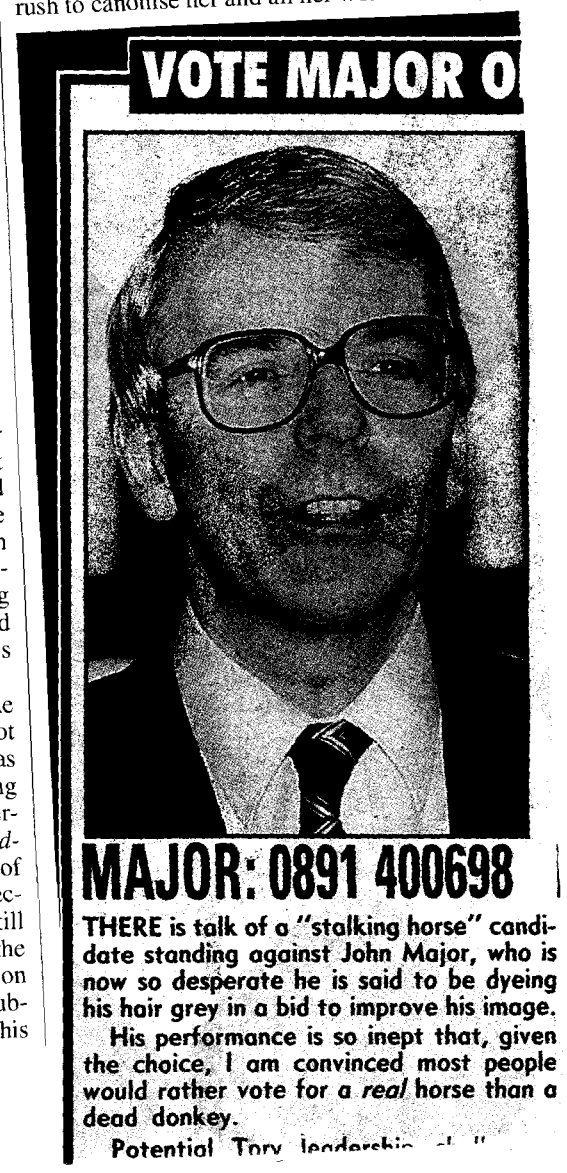
The assumption, shared it seems by all the Conservative papers, is that Major cannot survive very long as leader, although none has as yet directly published an editorial calling for him to go. It has been left to non-Conservative voices like Hugo Young in the *Guardian* to question the democratic propriety of seeking to change a leader who won an election as recently as 18 months ago, and still commands the support of his cabinet and the parliamentary party for the programme on which they were all elected. There is no substantive issue that divides Major from his most likely successor, Kenneth Clarke, and no change in policy or in external circumstances to warrant his removal.

The press campaign against Major has helped create the current mood and has amplified the doubts about his leadership. The doubts have been increased by the way in which he has sometimes conducted himself. The decision to keep Norman Lamont after Black Wednesday saddled Major with a chancellor who had lost credibility with the markets, and raised doubts about his judgment.

When he did finally accede to the pressure earlier this year, it made him seem weak, earned him the enmity of the man who had once been his closest ally, and elevated Clarke, Major's most likely successor, to a position that would advertise his merits as an alternative leader and prime minister.

Beyond the changing fashions of the media and the ups and downs of the political cycle, there are deeper reasons for the Tories' current predicament. The party is still finding it difficult to adjust to life after Thatcher. It is becoming increasingly clear that the party has been deeply scarred by the Thatcher years and in particular by the manner in which that era ended. It is finding it hard to resume normal working again.

Thatcher's legacy is a poisoned one for the Conservatives. Hailed as Britain's greatest peace-time prime minister by her admirers and even by many of her critics, cool assessment of her role in restoring the fortunes of the Conservative Party and significantly changing the agenda of political debate in Britain, are in danger of being drowned in the rush to canonise her and all her works.


VOTE MAJOR O
MAJOR: 0891 400698
THERE is talk of a "stalking horse" candidate standing against John Major, who is now so desperate he is said to be dyeing his hair grey in a bid to improve his image.
His performance is so inept that, given the choice, I am convinced most people would rather vote for a *real* horse than a dead donkey.
Potential Tory leadership



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Like Napoleon on Saint Helena, she and her associates are busy using her exile to construct a myth about the past in order to influence the present. The stories of the last days are multiplying at an alarming rate. She is being portrayed as a martyr, brought down by the treachery of her friends and colleagues. The mistakes of her premiership, particularly the mismanagement of the economy and the poll tax, are being blamed on others.

A cult formed around Thatcher during her years of power, and it shows no signs of withering away. In his off-the-record conversation with Michael Brunson, Major scornfully referred to his party critics harking back to a "Golden Age that Never Was". His problem is that he won the leadership because he was Thatcher's candidate, but as leader he has failed to live up to her expectations. He is in the strange position of having been first annointed by the Thatcherites, and then denounced by them.

**Major is in the strange position of having been first annointed by the Thatcherites, and then denounced by them**

If they had not thought originally that he was "one of us", their disappointment would have been less. Thatcher's reported private remarks about Major—"I have been totally deceived"—conveys her disillusion and the Thatcherites' sense of being betrayed.

The main grievance that the Thatcherites have against Major is over Europe, and specifically over the Maastricht treaty. What became clear during the tortuous parliamentary process to ratify the treaty, was that Major's priority was to prevent at all costs the party's serious divisions turning into a split. The Euro-rebels sensed that, while he had no enthusiasm for European union, he was not prepared to see Britain marginalised in Europe. He constantly refused, and still refuses to define a point of principle over which he would be prepared to break up the Community rather than make concessions.

The European issue is the key issue on which the "bastards" in the cabinet and "barmy" MPs have rebelled against Major's leadership. But it is also inextricably entangled with economic management as well. The proudest boast of the Thatcherites was that they had turned the economy round, cured the British disease, and inoculated the patient from both inflation and recession. The reappearance of both after 1989 cast a shadow over the achievements of the Thatcher era. In the Thatcherite demonology, the blame for the economic mismanagement of the last years is laid firmly on the Treasury, and therefore on Nigel Lawson and Major, for attempting to create the conditions for Britain to enter the ERM by shadowing the Deutschmark. The loss of control over the boom fuelled the subsequent inflation and forced the economy into recession, which then became far deeper and longer than it need have been because of the extra deflation that was imposed on Britain once it had joined the ERM in 1990.

From the Thatcherite standpoint, membership of the ERM and the pressure towards European union from the other 11 EC members, was part of the threat to the entire Thatcherite project. The erosion of national sovereignty involved the transfer of powers to supranational bodies dedicated to the kind of corporatist and collectivist measures from which Britain under Thatcher had begun to prise itself loose.

Major's problem is that he has embraced enough of the programme for European union to have lost the trust of the Thatcherites; at the same time, he is still in thrall to much of the Thatcherite legacy, so has generally failed to set new directions, except in a few areas such as local government finance.

The Thatcherite project has continued to roll forward, particularly in education, health and privatisation, but without a sense of real commitment or enthusiam on the part of ministers. So eager has Major been to assert his continuity with the past, that he has challenged relatively little, but he has still challenged enough to disappoint the Thatcherites.

They cannot dislodge him, but they have effectively destroyed his authority. He will not go immediately, but it is unlikely that he will lead the Conservatives into another general election. The result of the European elections next year may prove critical.

*Andrew Gamble teaches politics at the University of Sheffield and is author of several studies of modern British Conservatism*

TALKING HORSE
RUM: 0891 400699
are not sure how much support Major
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hem make up their minds with the
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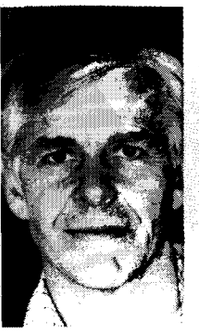

**ROBIN HANBURY-TENISON**
Explorer and author

**What books and authors have had the greatest influence on your political beliefs?**
*The Missionaries* and *A View of the World* by Norman Lewis; A R Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago*; James Lovelock's *Gaia*; L Van Der Post's *Yet Being Someone Other* and Peter Fleming's *Brazilian Adventure*, the first book to debunk exploration.
**Name one film, one book, one play, and one song or piece of music that you would most like everyone to see, read or hear.**
**Film:** *The Mission.*
**Book:** Jonathon Porritt's *Save the Earth.*
**Play:** *Savages*, by Christopher Hampton.
**Poem**: "Break, Break" by Tennyson. Written, like "In Memoriam", in grief at the death of Arthur Hallam, it is a comfort when remembering those who have died.
**Music:** *Bachianas Brasilieras No 5* by Villa-Lobos. Ever since Adrian Cowell used it in an early film about the Villas Boas brothers and the efforts to save Brazil's Indians from extinction, it has evoked for me the sadness of that genocide.
**In the early stages of your life, which figures stand out as an important influence on you?**
My mother, who taught me until I was eight and let me do dangerous things sensibly. And Richard Mason, the friend from university with whom I made the first crossing of South America. He was later killed by uncontacted Indians.
**What event during your lifetime has had the greatest effect on your political beliefs?**
The collapse of communism. In a world without two opposing superpowers, ethnic conflict is now the greatest danger.
**Which political figure—living or dead—do you most admire?**
Alive: Aung San Suu Kyi, the elected leader of Burma, under permanent house arrest.
**If you could visit any time in history for 24 hours, which would you choose?**
Columbus' arrival in the Caribbean, because it must have been wonderful to be there at that moment before the killing began.
**What do you consider the greatest threat at present to individual freedom and liberty?**
Short-term greed and corruption, vices that are now so widespread and accepted worldwide that concern for future generations seems to have evaporated.
**On important matters, whose opinion—other than your own—do you trust most?**
Louella, my wife; Stephen Corry, director-general of Survival.
**Who is the greatest prime minister we never had?**
No idea—I am not a political animal.
**If you could pass one law, what would it be?**
A new universal law to match the UN Declaration of Human Rights, recognising *all* life on earth as interdependent and essential.



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There's a disease about: it's called one-party rot. As the Conservatives meet in Blackpool, **Sarah Baxter** counts the hands in the honeypot

# The sleaze at the heart of Tory Britain

Whom do you trust? The Conservatives or Labour? The Tories posed the question at the last election in the confident expectation of getting the answer they wanted. After more than a decade in power, they were the natural party of government—and naturally more trustworthy than an inexperienced opposition.

Labour's message, "Time for a change", failed to impress. The voters believed things had changed already. A new trustworthy Prime Minister, John Major, was in place.

How long ago that seems. First, Major's reputation for competence vanished on Black Wednesday. Since then, successive crises and scandals have eroded trust in him as a person. In July, there was a revealing poll conducted by ICM for the *Guardian*. When asked whether Major was straightforward or devious, respondents split straight down the middle (47 per cent as against 46 per cent).

The Tories' longevity in office may at last be counting against them. The broken promises are all the more obvious now that Major has let down as many people as Lady Thatcher before him. The imposition of VAT on fuel, the pit-closures dispute and Iraqgate have all been powerful instances of ministerial duplicity.

The "sleaze" factor may finally be having an impact. One-party rule has led to arrogance and complacency. Many of the problems pre-date Major, but he has shown no desire to clean up the Augean stables. Indeed, under his stewardship, the one-party rot has spread.

Asil Nadir is still a fugitive from British justice in the Turkish haven of North Cyprus. In his possession is a watch bearing the inscription "Don't let the buggers get you down". Its sender? Michael Mates, then the Northern Ireland minister.

When the scandal broke, Mates was treated with great leniency by Major. The head of the civil service, Sir Robin Butler, went so far as to declare the minister's conduct acceptable. In the end, Mates was sacked, but only after Major could no longer stand the public outcry.

The Conservative Party had benefited to the tune of £440,000 from Nadir. It was this generosity that had led him to be on first-name terms with politicians. It later transpired that the Tories were not at all fussy about their business donors. Major-General Brian Wyldbore-Smith, the Tories' former director of fundraising, confessed that he could not recall ever turning down a cheque. Lord McAlpine, the party treasurer under Thatcher, revealed that there were "tons of offshore accounts" available for overseas contributors.

John Major outside No 10 the day after his party's election/Select

Among the leading Conservative Party donors between 1979 and 1992 were:

- John Latsis, the Greek shipping magnate, who is reputed to have given the Tories a record £2 million. He also backed the Greek junta in the early seventies.
- Octav Botnar, the former head of Nissan UK, who gave the Tories £1 million in the early Thatcher years. He now lives in exile after being accused of defrauding the government of £97 million in unpaid taxes.
- Li Ka Shing, the richest man in Hong Kong, who gave the Tories £500,000. He hosted a dinner for Major in Hong Kong in 1991. In 1986, he was censured for alleged insider dealing.

Other donors included T T Sui, a Hong Kong explosives manufacturer with close links to China; Abdul Shamji, chairman of the Gomba group, who was jailed for perjury for 15 months in 1989; and Jack Lyons, who was convicted in the Guinness trial and stripped of his knighthood.

Asil Nadir is said to have expected a knighthood for his money. This was not unreasonable. The going rate for a K, according to the *Sunday Times*, is about £500,000. The "Insight" team studied 4,000 donations by 711 companies since 1982 and found that chairmen and chief executives of companies that gave that sum were virtually guaranteed an honour.

Labour's deputy leader, Margaret Beckett, took up this theme in her attack on Tory party funding in the House of Commons in June. The boards of the top ten corporate donors since 1979 were bristling with titles and gongs, she said. The shipping company, P&O, for example, had given £727,000 over the years, and received one peerage and three knighthoods.

None of this would be known but for the obligation of companies to declare donations in their annual accounts. The Conservative Party does not release any information about the origins of its money. Only a fraction of the £22 million that the Tories raised during election year is accounted for.

The Home Affairs Select Committee has been looking into the funding of political parties. Its investigations began before the Nadir affair, which gave it the spice of topicality. It has now interviewed all its witnesses, including the Tory party chairman, Sir Norman Fowler, and is due to report this autumn.

The Tories have a majority on the committee, but Labour is likely to issue a minority report, which will call for disclosure of information, as already exists in the United States, and for a ban on foreign donations. John Major, who is personally responsible for the fund-raising activities of the Conservative Party—an organisation that has no legal existence—is expected to remain silent.

Companies are not just after gongs and knighthoods for their top executives. They expect something concrete for their money, as Lord King made plain when he withdrew British Airways' £40,000 donation in protest at the government's decision to open Heathrow to greater US compe-



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tition. Their leading figures can also expect to be appointed to quangos, joining what Professor John Stewart has called the "new magistracy".

The Labour MP for Knowsley North, George Howarth, has analysed the membership of 41 quangos and cross-referenced them to known Conservative Party donors. The information was painstakingly collected from obfuscatory parliamentary answers wrung from reluctant ministers.

"What emerges," writes Howarth (in *Quangos and political donations to the Tory Party*, published by Knowsley North Constituency Labour Party), "is a sleazy picture of a government which appoints 'one of us', which in John Major's era seems to be tested against financial donations to the Tory party."

Howarth also identified seven members of various Urban Development Corporations who are associated with companies that make political donations to the Tories. It is now very obvious that new quangos, such as UDCs and hospital trusts, are stuffed with Conservative Party supporters, whether or not their firms are actually donors. The same is likely to be true of the new police authorities, whose chairs are to be directly appointed by the Home Secretary.

"Quangos have become an extension of the honours system," the shadow environment secretary, Jack Straw, charged recently at the launch of Labour's "Quango Watch". They have taken direct control from local authorities of a net annual spend of £4.5 billion in the fields of education, transport and urban development, he claimed. There have been no commensurate gains in efficiency, possibly because only second-rate businessmen have the time to be public servants.

Scandals over allegedly political appointments are beginning to come to light. The National Health Service Trust Federation, which represents opted-out hospitals, recently parted company with its £60,000-a-year chief executive, Lucille Campney, a former Conservative Party worker and adviser to William Waldegrave at the Department of Health. She wrote a pamphlet in 1987 claiming that there was "overwhelming evidence that Labour-controlled councils up and down the country have been penetrated by Marxists and revolutionary activists".

In the West Country, Admiral Sir Godfrey-Milton Thompson, a surgeon who masterminded the medical treatment of casualties during the Falklands war, is taking the Cornwall Community Healthcare Trust to an industrial tribunal, after he was replaced as chairman by Abigail Kirby-Harris, a former chairwoman of the North Cornwall Conservative Party. "My politics must have been a consideration," she said of her appointment, "but I also think I have the right qualities to lead an organisation like the Trust."

Wales, in particular, has been hit by scandal. The Welsh Development Agency hired a conman to work for it, who interviewed call girls in a hotel room and was recently jailed for two years. The secretary of the health minister, Gwilym Jones, was appointed to the South Glamorgan health authority, prompting a furious early-day motion, signed by Neil Kinnock. And businessman Brian Thomas, who chauffeured the former secretary of state for Wales, David Hunt, around during the election, is now on the board of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and the Countryside Council for Wales.

In Scotland and Wales, quangos are very often used as a "corrective" to Labour-controlled councils. The same may happen elsewhere as the Tories lose their grip on other local authorities (as in last May's county council elections). Increasingly, Conservatives are beginning to wonder whether it is worth being a councillor, when you get paid for running a quango without the trouble of being elected.

## JOBS FOR THE BOYS

**If you are at the top of a company that gives big money to the Tories, you can expect to be rewarded with a plum position on the board of a quango. Here are just a few examples:**

**The Bank of England**
The Court of Directors consists of 18 people, six of whom are associated with companies that make donations to the Conservative Party, including Frances Heaton, a non-executive director of Lazard Brothers, which gave £20,000 to the Tories last year and Sir Bryan Lees, the chairman of GKN, which gave £30,000.

**British Coal Corporation**
Of its 11 members, four are connected with companies that make donations to the Tories, including its chairman, Neil Clarke, the former chief executive of Charter Consolidated, which gave £26,000 to the Tories last year.

**British Nuclear Fuels**
Its chairman, until recently, was Sir Christopher Harding, the chairman of BET, which gave £25,000 to the Tories in March this year. He is also a non-executive director of Hanson, which gave £100,000 to the Tories in 1992.

**British Railways Board**
Three board members have a relationship with companies that donate to the Tories, including Kenneth Dixon, the non-executive vice-chairman of Legal and General, which gave £40,000 last year.

**DTI advisory panel on deregulation**
Its chairman is Sir Nigel Mobbs, chairman and chief executive of Slough Estates, which gave £44,000 to the Tories last year; and vice-chairman of Kingfisher, which gave £25,000 in January this year. He is also a director of Howard de Walden Estates, which gave £10,000, and the Cookson Group, which gave £5,600 last year.

**The Housing Corporation**
Its chairman, Sir Christopher Benson, is chairman of the Sun Alliance, which donated £50,000 to the Tories last year.

**London Regional Transport**
Dr Alan Watkins, the chairman of London Underground and London Buses, is a director of Lucas Industries, which gave £25,000 to the Tories last year.

**Scottish Enterprise**
Its chairman, Sir David Nickson, is a non-executive director of three companies that make donations to the Tories: Scottish and Newcastle Breweries (£70,000); Hambros (£53,000) and General Accident and Fire and Life Association.

The Tories' stranglehold on power has also had an insidious effect on the civil service. The boundaries between the government and party politics have become blurred. During the US election campaign, civil servants at the Home Office rummaged in their files to see if there was any dirt on Bill Clinton. As the Scott inquiry progresses, it is also becoming apparent that civil servants colluded with ministers in deceiving the public over arms sales to Iraq.

In his memoirs, *The Turbulent Years*, Kenneth Baker records that the Downing Street civil servant, Sir Charles Powell, urged Douglas Hurd to sign Thatcher's nomination papers. "As Foreign Secretary," Baker writes, "Douglas rightly felt that it was improper for a civil servant to act in this way." Hurd duly signed, nevertheless.

Powell has gone on to become a director of the National Westminster Bank—just one of many civil servants to take up top City appointments. Thatcher's former cabinet secretary, Lord Armstrong, is now a director of Rothschild's, the merchant bank, as is Sir Frank Cooper, the former permanent secretary of the Ministry of Defence. Sir Peter Middleton, the former Treasury permanent secretary, is now deputy chairman of Barclays.

More controversial was the case of a Home Office civil servant, Charles Erickson, who worked in the unit responsible for contracting out prison services. Erickson took a job with the private sector company Group Four, which now carries out escort duties on behalf of the Prison Service. The case was referred to civil service head Sir Robin Butler, but Erickson's move was given the all-clear.

Former cabinet ministers have joined the gravy train. As Gordon Brown recently highlighted, Norman Tebbit, who privatised British Telecom when he was industry secretary, now sits on BT's board. Lord (Peter) Walker, who privatised British Gas when he was industry secretary, sits on British Gas's board. And Sir Norman Fowler, who privatised National Freight as transport secretary, sits on National Freight's board. Many backbench Tory MPs serve as "consultants" to the privatised utilities.

Former chancellor Norman Lamont now works for Rothschild's; Lord Lawson for Barclays de Zoete Wedd; and Lord Young for Cable and Wireless, where he was recently awarded a 76 per cent pay rise.

It might be as well to remember that John Major himself once worked for Standard Chartered Bank, where he was assisted in his career by the former Conservative chancellor, Lord Barber.

How long can it be before he is back there?



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The real Tory malcontents are in the constituencies. The party must become more democratic, Sharon Spiers tells **Gareth Smyth**

# OMOV for Tories?

Three "bastards" in the cabinet and four "barmy" backbenchers are the least of the Conservatives' problems. The party is £19 million in debt, membership has fallen to less than 500,000, and the number of party agents has dropped in a year from 299 to 234. Answers are needed and party chairman Sir Norman Fowler's new "management board" is not providing them.

Sharon Spiers (pronounced as in church spires) wants radical solutions. The co-ordinator of the Conservative Charter movement, which has campaigned since 1980 for a democratic party, is up-beat and exudes a confidence rare these days among Conservatives.

"People are begining to realise there are serious things wrong," she says. "There is a general recognition that the party pays precious little heed to what the average member thinks. It's showing itself at the moment with Maastricht, it showed itself three years ago in the poll tax."

Spiers is neither barmy nor a bastard. She fits none of the stale categories used to pigeonhole Tories. She is not at home with the paternalism of the "wets" (the Tory Reform Group has given scant encouragement to the Charter movement) and as a Euro-federalist is no "little Englander" out to bury Major for his European policy.

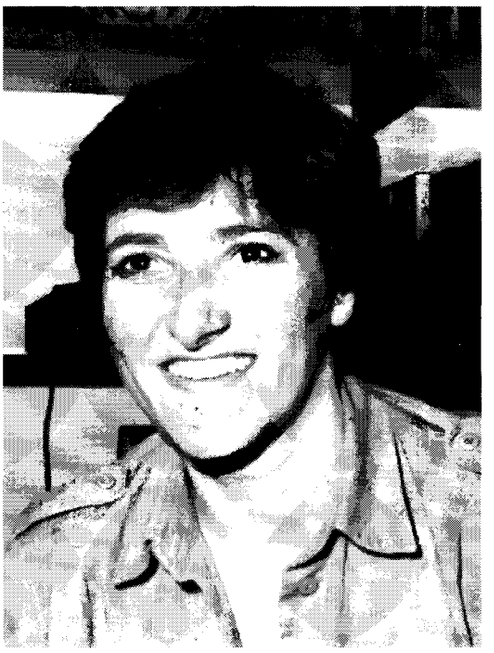
Rather, she is one of an increasingly active "new wave" of Tories, with the drive you might expect from the 34-year-old marketing research manager of a large pharmaceuticals company. In common with modernisers such as David Willetts and Harriet Crawley, she supported Thatcherism as an assault on the establishment. She is against class-based privilege, and favours equal opportunities for women and ethnic minorities. She supports individual initiative and "choice" across issues, whether on abortion or in favouring low personal taxation.

Her core approach to the Conservative Party's structure is simple. The Thatcherite revolution—which engulfed vested interests in trade unions, the banks and local government—has missed Central Office, leaving it with "all the worst elements of a closed shop, and an inefficient environment run by people who in the main have not worked in a commercial organisation."

The election by constituency repesentatives of the party chairman, vice-chairmen and treasurers would, she says, begin wider change. Spiers is not against anonymous donations (other parties have them, too), but she believes that an elected body should be responsible for publishing full accounts.

Oddly, there is no such thing as "the Conservative Party". Central Office is legally the private office of the leader—who appoints the chairman—and has no formal connection with the constituency associations. The lack of accountability fuels the financial crisis. Constituencies have barely increased their contributions in 15 years. From the late 1970s, with Alistair McAlpine as party treasurer, emphasis shifted towards large personal donations. "There was an arrogance that we could always get out of trouble, (that) McAlpine could always magic money from somewhere," recalls Spiers.

But with recession and the government's unpopularity, the flow has dried up. Figures to be revealed at Tory conference in Blackpool will show that personal donations in the year ending April 1993 have plunged to just £8.3 million from £22 million the year before.



Central Office's overdraft with the Royal Bank of Scotland is £14 million, three times the size of its only known asset, the lease on its building in Smith Square (the freehold was sold in 1981 to raise funds). The question of Asil Nadir's contribution to the 1987 general election—stolen money, according to Touche Ross, the accountants winding up his affairs—is still unresolved.

**"Conservative Central Office has all the worst elements of a closed shop. If it was a company, it would probably have been bankrupt by now"**

For Spiers the crisis is not unexpected. "If (Central Office) was a company, it would probably have been bankrupt. The problem has been steadily getting worse. We were taking money from people we considered not to be utterly honourable. Had we been in a stronger financial position, we would probably have returned Asil Nadir's £440,000. With the bank knocking at the door, it's not an option."

Spiers won't wait for the Westminster cavalry. "Tory MPs follow opinion, they don't lead it—I don't think most of them realised we were in a recession for about 18 months."

Selection methods are partly responsible. "Assessments (for the candidates' list) are done by one MP, one industrialist and a constituency person. The MP dominates. Who does he choose? Someone like himself."

Spiers believes the current malaise threatens the continued success of Europe's leading centre-right party. "We control only one county council, only 96 borough councils. We have no Tory MPs in Manchester or Glasgow, only one in Newcastle. One could envisage a scenario where we might not recover."

Not everyone agrees. Robin Nott, chair of North West Norfolk Conservatives, is happy with Central Office and blames the media for the party's woes—"You won't like what I've said, so you won't print it," he says. The wife of Roger Henderson, chair of Buckingham Conservatives, says that her husband wouldn't want to talk to *NSS* as the party's affairs are "the business only of the members".

But nine associations have submitted conference motions saying the party leadership should listen more to members. And 18 constituencies have tabled specific requests for either full financial accounts or more accountable structures (Norwood, for example, wants the party chairman to be elected by a ballot of members).

"We're very disgruntled," says June Tucker, chair of the Chingford Conservatives, who see Central Office as ineffective and inefficient. "Norman Fowler is not doing enough quickly enough. In Chingford we always send controversial motions, but we never get chosen to speak."

Party managers are holding their breath. Blackpool next week could be the most fractious Tory conference since Margaret Thatcher told critics "the lady's not for turning". Mid Bedfordshire's request that motions should be "accepted without censorship" will not overcome Central Office's tight management of proceedings. But the frustration of the Tory grassroots is bubbling away underneath.

"There is no mechanism within the party for reform, but the huge momentum behind change will eventually burst out," says Sharon Spiers. "At some point it will be like a floodgate opening."



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Nobody took much interest in the changes made in this year's budget to the North Sea oil's tax regime. Yet they could cost 10,000 jobs, argues **Simon Taggart**

# Killing the goose

Pit closures and VAT on granny's heating bill may bring a backbench rebellion here or a by-election defeat there, but energy policy usually excites little interest in UK politics. The general apathy over changes in this year's budget to the North Sea oil tax regime is a case in point.

In a move wholly unexpected by all but a tiny handful of players and analysts, the budget transformed the North Sea fiscal regime, upsetting the stability considered an important plus for the past decade, both by the oil companies and by hundreds of support industry firms, ranging from one-person widget-makers to major drilling contractors.

Although opponents of the changes mounted an impressive lobbying campaign—forming a new representative body for the oil-field support sector and tabling two well-drafted Finance Bill amendments—press coverage has been scanty, public awareness virtually nil outside the east-coast oil towns, and parliamentary opposition limited to the nitty-gritty of clause-by-clause debate.

**Reports of a growing division between the DTI and the Treasury mean the cause for alarm is all the greater**

As even the Treasury conceded that up to 10,000 jobs could be lost, this is both surprising and alarming. In the light of reports of a division between the DTI and the Treasury, and growing evidence of incompetence in the drafting of the legislation, the cause for alarm is all the greater.

The changes have two major effects. First, they reduce from 75 per cent to 50 per cent the rate of Petroleum Revenue Tax (PRT) for which paying oil fields (the larger ones) are liable, while abolishing it altogether for new fields. This is less generous than it sounds: 34 of 54 forthcoming developments would not have paid anyway.

Second, and controversially, they remove the relief from PRT available for exploration and appraisal drilling, in effect increasing fourfold the cost of drilling wells. Hitherto, such wells had been subsidised by up to 80 per cent through tax relief, giving even small operators an incentive to go out and find oil.

Clearly, this means the bigger companies already pumping large volumes get a windfall. Hence the vocal support by BP and the quieter approval of Shell, Esso, Mobil and Marathon.

Indeed, BP will be £100 million a year better off over the next three years. The company argues that it has produced 20 per cent of UK oil and gas, but paid 70 per cent of production taxes in recent years and, as a result of the changes, is now considering another 18 developments and field appraisements, and will speed up work on five known fields.

This suggests an injection of new vitality into the North Sea, yet critics fear exactly the opposite. Oil is a global industry, and the North Sea has to compete for investment with every other province in the world. There is no intrinsic reason why BP, Shell and others should reinvest their windfalls in the North Sea, when there is the allure of new opportunities in central Asia, Vietnam, Yemen and Colombia.

If these countries look more promising on a dollars-per-well basis, the withdrawal of tax relief for exploration work in the North Sea will result in a shift abroad of exploration spending from the UK, while the major oil companies still enjoy the benefits of the reduction in PRT. Needless to say, if no exploration work is done, new fields, be they small (increasingly the norm for the region) or the remaining "elephant" fields, will not be found.

A leaked document from Shell—a windfall winner, remember—reinforced this fear. It stated that exploration drilling would be cut by half and exploration division staff pared by 30 per cent as a result of the budget.

Then there are the myriad smaller oil companies with North Sea interests and the large companies with relatively low exposure here, like Texaco. For these, the changes to PRT were a lottery. Those that happened to have a stake in larger PRT-paying fields won. Others lost. Many smaller companies privately admit to scaling down their work in the UK North Sea and instead looking abroad.

Hard evidence of a falling off in exploration work was quick in coming. A Chevron executive announced that the company's exploration spending in the UK this year would be 30 per cent down on pre-budget plans. The local branch of the International Association of Drilling Contractors reported a fall in drilling contracts out for tender, from 14 in April 1992, to just two in April 1993. In June, the association reported: "Members are under stress with one-third of our North Sea rigs idle, representing 2,900 direct employees and over 15,000 service/support employees. If the budget reforms bite hard, we could see another 2,400 direct and 14,000 associated jobs disappear."

Estimates of the total number of budget-related job losses from the large support companies and the 1,000 smaller oil-field support firms reach 21,000 and more. And this comes at a time when the oil-platform fabrication industry is also struggling. From a peak of around 20,000 jobs this time last year, the four major fabrication yards now employ a maximum of 5,000. As ever, it is not only a matter of jobs going, but also of exportable expertise being lost.

The devising and execution of the PRT changes are a study in incompetence. Unsurprisingly, the rationale given by the Treasury was straight from the Thatcher School of Grocery Management. In one single and exceptional tax year, 1991-92, the government made a loss on its PRT account due to retrospective clawbacks. Rather than either modestly amending the regime to preclude the possibility of future losses, or consulting with industry bodies over more wide-ranging changes, it opted for immediate wholesale change.

Only weeks after the budget, the Inland Revenue admitted: "It has become clear that the definition of contracts in force on Budget Day . . . limits the availability of transitional relief more tightly than the government intended." An amendment was tabled, revising the eligibility criteria for £200 million of transitional relief for companies already committed to drilling before the budget and allowing further payments of up to £10 million per oil company over an 18-month period.

Interestingly, this amendment was offered in place of two industry-sponsored backbench Tory proposals with cross-party support that would have phased in the reduction of PRT liability in order to pay for three years of transitional relief, allowing perhaps 100 more wells to be drilled with the saving of more jobs over three years, and all at no cost to the Treasury.

These proposals, supported by a range of industry groups, were fiercely opposed by BP, whose chief executive for Europe, Chris Gibson Smith, wrote to all members of the standing committee on the Finance Bill bluntly threatening that any phasing of the PRT reductions would jeopardise its acceleration of development plans.

Then, at the height of the silly season, an obscure press release from the Inland Revenue acknowledged that another piece of slack drafting had opened a loophole potentially worth as much as £300 million in a single tax year, almost half the Treasury's projected gain from the overall changes. Yet further revision was necessary.

While job cuts will follow fast on the heels of reduced exploration drilling, the impact of the Finance Act on a UK industry that still pumps as much oil, let alone gas, as Kuwait, will not become clear for a number of years because of the long lead-in times for developing fields. Indeed, if exploration falls off to a serious extent, we may never know what has been missed.

But the seriousness of the issue goes beyond oil *per se*. It underlines the success the government has had in sidelining all aspects of UK energy policy. This was evident during the coal debacle, is evident in changes to oil taxation policy, and will soon become evident in the handling of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission reports on the gas industry.



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Peter Schrank

Have the Palestinians gained anything from the peace settlement? **Alexander Cockburn** asks Shafik al-Hout, who resigned from the PLO's executive over the issue

# No new Jerusalem for the Palestinians

It would take the pen of Swift to evoke the nauseating scenes of hypocrisy, bad faith and self-delusion on the White House lawn on 13 September, crammed as it was with people who for many years were complicit in the butchery and torture of Palestinians and the denial of their rights, and were now applauding the "symbolic handshake" that ratified further abnegation of those same rights.

In the shadow of an American president with the poise and verbiage of the manager of a McDonald's franchise, Arafat produced oratory so meagre it made Rabin sound like Cicero. To think that long years of struggle and UN resolutions acknowledging Palestinian claims should end with this pathetic fellow shouting thank-you to his suzerains.

Hillary's comic-opera Rasputin, Michael Lerner, mustered on that same lawn, said later that: "This Rosh Hashanah, for the first time in Israel's 46-year history, it will be possible to worship without feeling a conflict between moral sensitivity, on one hand, and loyalty to Israel and the Jewish people on the other."

Really? Thirteen thousand Palestinian political prisoners unmentioned, still in chains, land stolen, hundreds of thousands expelled and in exile, and a deal forged only because Rabin and Peres, confronted by a new generation of Palestinian leadership in the territories—not just Hamas—plucked Arafat and his PLO from the grave and guided his hand through the articles of surrender, to which supposed advocates of Palestinian rights have been, both here and in Israel, a party.

Is it our role, as supporters of justice for Palestinians, to ask if this is the best they can hope for? This sort of coercive harmony merely helps to mould the contours of surrender, as liberals have done so often in the past. By assisting in such *realpolitik* one adds one's mite to the treasury of the oppressors. Study the exchanges between Rabin and Arafat, and it's plain that Israel commits itself to nothing. Arafat gave up everything, including the right to resist.

Right now, Palestinians get the right to manage the world's largest prison, the Gaza Strip, plus one cow town. It's as though the Irish in 1921 got Tralee and a few acres in West Cork, with Britain holding the entire eastern half, Belfast, Dublin, Waterford, its army free to roam at will across the Irish enclaves, themselves fragmented by British highways and drained of water. There will be no Palestinian sovereignty and an economy completely subordinated to Israel's. As the Israeli economy is internationalised, companies will set up sweatshops in Gaza and the West Bank, and the Palestinians will furnish the labour for six US dollars a day. Members of the Palestine Liberation Army, imported from outside the territories, will do the policing, just as the sepoys did for the British in India. The Hebrew-language newspaper *Yediot Ahronot* reported on 2 September that Israel's security police were already cooperating with the PLO to ensure security against "extremists" in the Gaza Strip.

The day after the signing, I talked to Shafik al-Hout, a member of Arafat's inner circle from the late 1960s until he resigned from the PLO's executive committee on 22 August. His reaction is not markedly different from that of many secular Palestinians:

**AC: Why do you sound so depressed, Shafik? Don't you like history being made?**

SH: As far as the political agreement is concerned there's nothing that answers the demands of Palestinians. We are still only at the theoretical level and right now no one is satisfied. Wait till we start into particulars in, say, Jericho on matters like the shift of authority from the Israeli military to local Palestinians. They were waving flags in Jericho and Gaza. They may be euphoric. They may have been hired for the day by Arafat's people. But flags don't equal freedom, and the camera didn't show the Israeli soldiers monitoring those demonstrations.

I wouldn't expect anything more than very short-term support for Arafat. The Palestinians in the diaspora feel ignored and betrayed. If this is the maximum that Arafat could get after all the years of the *intifada*, what will he get now that he's in the hands of the Israelis, on the really important things like sovereignty, Jerusalem, the return of Palestinians who've been driven out since 1948? Those most sympathetic to Arafat's deal say that this agreement is but a first step, so one should not stand against him. But then, remember how Israel and Arafat have behaved.

**AC: What do you think happened to Arafat?**

SH: There's no doubt in my mind that he has degenerated. There was the blow of 1982 in Lebanon when they pushed us into the sea. We should have reconsidered our strategic objectives and organisational structures, but Arafat did nothing. Then there was his support for Saddam Hussein.

I was elected to the PLO's executive committee in 1991 and felt he was no longer the man I used to know. He was introverted, suspicious. His plane crash in Libya that year



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compounded these traits. I thought he would draw the necessary conclusion and widen the leadership; instead, he shrank it.

He probably felt he could either sit still and go steadily downhill, because he had no margin to move and act as a freedom fighter and no money from Saudi Arabia, or he could get back into action by relying on Israel and embarking on this adventure. The psychological aspect of this is that Arafat, being aware of his symbolic role, started to feel that if his stomach felt OK, then the stomach of the Palestinian people must feel OK. He doubtless thought in Washington that if he was victorious, then we were all victorious. He was dressed as a marshal. A marshal of what? He was called president. President of what? He got trapped by being in Tunis, away from the masses. He has been enchanted by the role of CNN. In that way he was imitating Sadat.

**AC: Does he really control $2.5 billion?**

SH: There's a lot of corruption in the PLO. Arafat holds all the financial strings. Only he can sign a cheque. There is no co-signatory. No one has been paid for the last four months, from those at the top of the ladder right down to the most humble partisan. We didn't join the movement to be paid, but when we became full-timers we had to earn our bread from the PLO. I'm also talking of institutions —like a secondary school in Lebanon, now closed because the rent wasn't paid—and of pensions for the martyrs' families.

There is PLO money; under his control, probably hundreds of millions, as much as $2.5 billion. There's Fatah money, too. He will take this money to Gaza and Jericho and spend some of it buying support and running his operation. You can either carry a stick that scares people, or have a lot of money to buy them, so what's he got left but the bag of gold?

Arafat couldn't go bankrupt in a normal way and say, "Look guys, what shall we do?" And we had a lot of useful ideas. We enjoyed luxuries we could have done without. We probably had more embassies around the world than the US. We could have changed this style, but he wouldn't discuss it.

**AC: Why did you quit the PLO's executive committee?**

SH: My resignation on 22 August was not rejectionism. I have to remind you that the PLO implicitly recognised Israel when we joined the UN as observers in 1974. We did it explicitly in 1988, when we declared the state of Palestine on the basis of UN Resolution 181, which called for the partition of Palestine. Moreover, we accepted Resolution 242 and gave up territory that was ours according to 181. Third, when the UN General Assembly convened in Geneva in 1988, Arafat addressed the assembly and George Shultz insisted he hold a press conference and dictated what he should say in English. It was a statement to the effect that Arafat recognised Israel and renounced terrorism. I supported that, even though I thought Arafat was paying the bill prematurely.

So it's not recognition of Israel I object to. But I thought we would come out better on the right to self-determination, on the right to return. I thought we might have to pay more, but I never thought we would be party to an agreement that pitchforks us into the unknown and gives up our last card as negotiators, namely the *intifada*, our right to resist occupation. So now we become the oppressors of our people; instead of the Israeli army, it's going to be the Palestinian policemen. Yesterday we were watching what I call the funeral in Washington, and there was an ambush in Gaza, probably by Hamas. In Washington, they expected Arafat to condemn the attack. What will be his position tomorrow when some Palestinians demonstrate about sovereignty, about full withdrawal?

**AC: What do you now look forward to?**

SH: I'm still for a two-state solution, a real peace that could be accepted, not imposed. I've always said there are three options. There's full recovery of Palestinian rights. That has no chance. I leave that to the ideologists and the fundamentalists and those who believe that even peace with Israel is wrong. The second option is politically one that could be implemented by reference to UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and to international law. And there is the third option, which we are now enjoying, namely the imposed one.

This last one does not have the necessary support of our people. It didn't go through our institutions, as required by our constitution. This was my last effort at compromise with Arafat. I said: "Please, Abu Ammar, call for a meeting of the Palestine National Council." But he didn't do this or even convene the medium body, the Central Council, or parliament.

**AC: Do you think this plan might gradually evolve into some real expression of sovereignty and self-determination?**

SH: No, my reading of the agreement offers me no clue on that. We get nothing, and Israel gets all it has been looking for since its inception. The agreement even legitimises occupation. The occupied territories are referred to as "disputed territories." By accepting that, we say Resolution 342 doesn't apply.

I would have been satisfied if Arafat had been able to get a separate, bilateral agreement with the United States to the effect that Washington believes in the Palestinians' right to self-determination and the right to return to Palestine. At least there would be a big brother guarantee.

**AC: I'm afraid the PLO always had illusions about that big brother. You should have gone to the American people more and the government less. But now what will Hamas do?**

SH: In Beirut yesterday there were 50,000 people and a hysterical atmosphere. Many people will line up with Hamas because it reminds them of Fatah when it started. Its batteries are charged and it can absorb a lot of what is left behind from the different factions. Add to this Muslim fanatics from other countries. Americans raise fears of Hamas but help create the conditions in which it prospers. A person like myself is left behind.

I represent Palestinians who want to survive properly, humanly, with dignity, with a piece of land. When I am denied this, why don't I jump to the ideological solution, which is to call for the extinction of Israel? But I can't go along with slogans that call for the destruction of Israel. Neither can hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. So we either join the fundamentalists or we capitulate—both unacceptable options.



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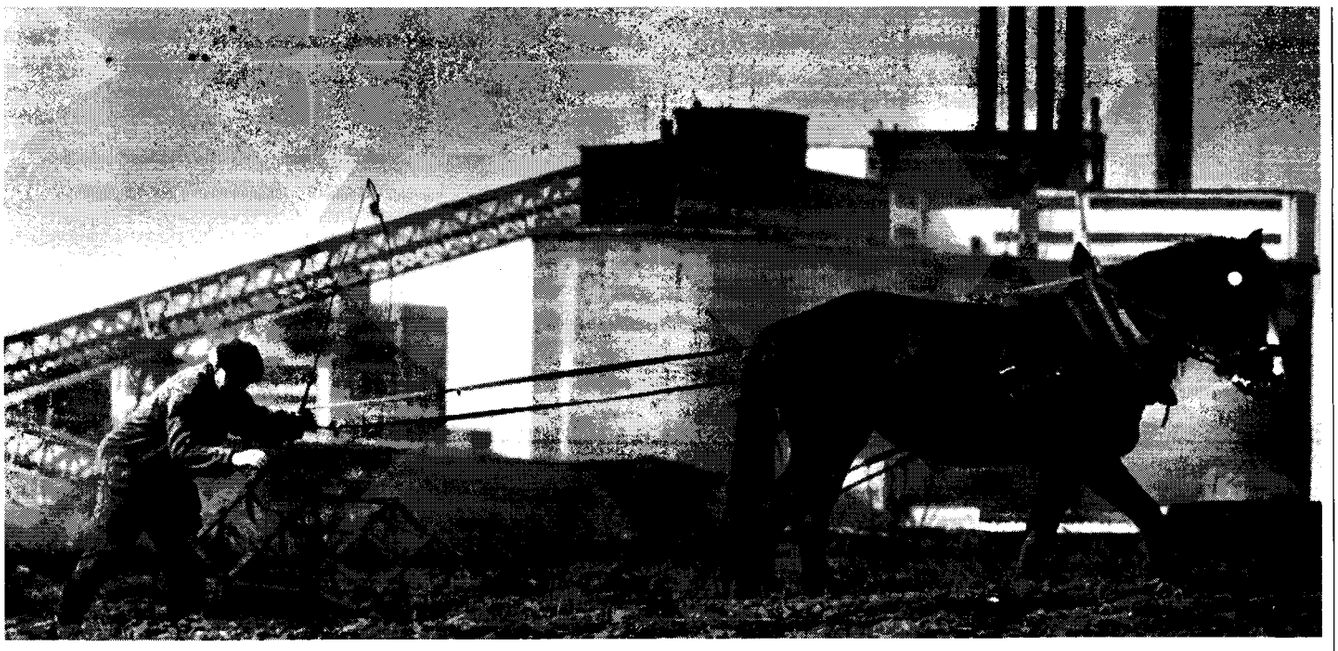

Paul Langrock/Select

It was mainly Poland's rural unemployed who delivered election victory to communism's heirs, reports **Lucy Kimbell**. But some economic winners have doubts too

# Nostalgia wins the day in Poland

In a country of small towns, Zelow looks like just another small town in the unremarkable middle of Poland. Its potholed main square, dating from the late 19th century, has a few shops, a scrubby patch of grass, a couple of trees and a bus stop. Two days before the elections that surprised the world by delivering a victory to the former communists, there were a few people hanging around the streets, old men on benches, people out doing their shopping, kids skiving off school, the unemployed.

The town of Zelow lies in a region that the Polish government recognised as particularly hard hit by unemployment. The local authority that governs the town and the 40-odd neighbouring villages that make up the commune of Zelow estimates that 40 per cent of the local population are unemployed, way above the national average of 15 per cent. The flash restaurants and smart new phone boxes of Warsaw seem centuries away, rather than 178 kilometres. So does the country's economic growth, estimated at 4 per cent this year, probably the highest in Europe.

**The flash restaurants and smart new phone boxes of Warsaw seem centuries away**

Poland's cities are bustling with small and big business, tourists, foreign consultants and economic migrants from the east. On Warsaw's main Jerozolimskie Street, a newly built McDonald's faces a new Burger King across the road. All over the capital, cylindrical advertising tubes successively become cans of Coke, Pepsi, Sprite and Fanta as new posters are wrapped round them, only giving way to political campaigns in the weeks that led up to the elections on 19 September.

It will probably take a few more weeks to digest the results of an election that gave 20 per cent of the vote to the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), a grouping of parties and unions associated with the former Polish United Workers' Party, rulers of Poland for 45 years. While the Polish Peasants Party (PSL), which came second with 15 per cent, also developed out of the communist regime, it is not immediately obvious that these two groups can work together. Nor is it likely that their democratic victory over the opposition parties, particularly the Solidarity movement, signifies an end to economic reform. Rather, it is a clear indication that Poland's spectacular growth after the "shock therapy" of the past three years has not brought benefits across the board.

The regional nature of the Polish economy has left some areas devastated as the restructuring of state-owned enterprises has led to high unemployment, with little prospect of people finding alternative work soon. State unemployment benefit usually lasts only a year, though in hard-hit regions such as industrial Silesia, or around Zelow, this may be extended. After the dole runs out, one-off social security payments have to be combined with moonlighting, and doing a bit of selling here or there. Even in the hustle of the capital, the middle-aged women standing on street corners selling plastic bags, bunches of wild flowers or apples from their allotments are still part and parcel of the local service industry. When the florists have closed, you will always find some old lady with a bunch of wilting flowers to sell, however cold it is.

Around 40 per cent of the Polish population lives in small towns and villages and, according to the exit polls conducted on election day, it is these people who came out to vote for the SLD and PSL. In cities, the Democratic Left Alliance was trailed by the Democratic Union of the former prime minister, Hanna Suchocka, which won just under 11 per cent nationally.

On the quiet streets of Zelow, the most common campaign posters are the four-leafed clover of the PSL, the SLD's declaration, "It can't go on like this", and the right-wing Centre Alliance's promise: "We will protect Poland." There are a fair number of signs of economic growth to be seen here—shops done up, the occasional new car, a wide range of goods available—but the overwhelming reality is high unemployment and low incomes. The reforms pushed through by the Democratic Union, the Liberal Democratic Congress and their allies since 1989 do not find many supporters in Zelow.

Slawomir Urbaniak heads the Zelow Enterprise Centre, which the commune set up this year in an attempt to stimulate local enterprise. "Zelow is a typical small town in Poland," he says. "One big factory and nothing else, and when that closed down, we suddenly



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had 2,197 people without jobs." In towns like this, and the surrounding villages, it is common for people to have a job as well as a family farm. The number of people who earn their living solely from agriculture is small. When the jobs go, a family can manage, but high interest rates and a lack of enterprise culture are unlikely to encourage anyone to set up in business.

Urbaniak shows me round the "incubator"— the building that houses the three new businesses the enterprise centre is supporting. On the ground floor, lathes and drills lie idle while water drips from the roof into a row of old paint tins. Until two years ago, 160 people worked here; then they joined the others who had been made redundant by Zelow's big textile factory. The commune inherited this metal shop, but the textile factory, a much larger former employer, belongs to the regional government. Four rooms upstairs are now being used by a company that employs local women to sew clothes that are sold in the company's own outlet in nearby Belchatow. Another small company stores tractors and parts on the premises, and round the back two young men upholster furniture.

Zofia Zielinska, who manages the tailoring company, professes herself satisfied with the enterprise centre's incubator. "It allowed us to expand from two people and one sewing machine last year to employing eight people. Here, the rent and facilities are cheap, and we have better conditions to produce quality jackets and blouses." Zielinska gained her business experience selling clothes in Zelow's largest shop, and her son, who heads the company, used to work in a metal workshop. They started from nothing, she says. So, what stops other local people going into business?

"They're afraid of bankruptcy, of taking risks."

In the upholsterers' workshop, 23-year-old Mariusz Pietrasik takes a break from doing exercises on the foam that will shortly be used to stuff a sofa, and pauses to consider the nature of entrepreneurship. "I haven't got a secretary to make you coffee, but I will have one day," he says with a smile. He doesn't know what makes him able to take the risk. And he has yet to realise to what extent he is cushioned by the incubator, with its low rents and advice.

Nothing much seems to be happening down at the Peasants' Cooperative in a nearby village, and, as we drive round the commune, Deputy Mayor Krzysztof Chmura points out a farm where the farmer was unable to sell his crop of blackcurrants abroad because of EC restrictions. "Instead of selling them, he ended up letting people pick their own for a small amount of money." Elsewhere he indicates the pipes being laid for the commune's new water system. He reckons that, by hiring local unemployed men to do the construction and pipelaying, the commune has managed to keep 100 people off the dole. "We try to employ them for at least half a year and then they can claim unemployment benefit after." Urbaniak can understand why people are nostalgic for life under communism. "Now they have to think for themselves. The communist system told you what to do, almost how much vodka to drink. Our job is to change people's mentalities through training and courses."

But the urban and rural unemployed and those on low incomes, those for whom buying a daily newspaper is a serious decision, are perhaps the obvious electorate of SLD and PSL. The new "social democrats" also found support in the cities, some of it undoubtedly from the former *nomenklatura*, and some from voters who didn't like the turbulence of the coalitions in the Sejm (parliament) or the involvement of the Church in politics.

Thirty-year-old Jacek Rylski, who works as a data processor for USWest, a yellow-pages publisher, voted SLD on 19 September. Sitting outside one of the American company's offices in a well-to-do Warsaw suburb, he admits either the Democratic Union or the Liberals would be a more obvious choice for him. But three things in particular worried him about the governments these parties formed over the past three years. One was opening up Poland too quickly to the west, and another was "selling the country to the Vatican", by passing the bill that restricts abortions and by insisting on religious education in schools.

**"The communist system told you how much vodka to drink. Our job is to change people's mentalities"**

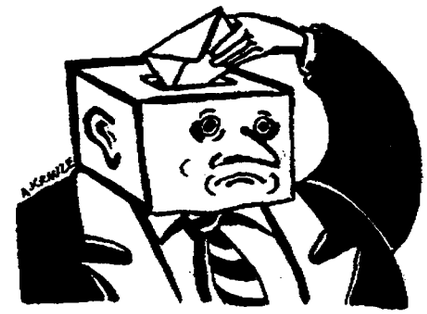
For Solidarity, the former opposition, the shock of the election results was that the reality of life under communism and the struggle throughout the eighties have been forgotten so quickly. But Jacek's third worry is that there are other things that should be remembered.

"I can't support the politicians like Jan Krzysztof Bielecki (the former prime minister) who say straight off that 40 years of communism left Poland in a bigger mess than the Hitler occupation. In our country there are still people who remember the occupation, and I don't think there was a harsher one, except maybe in Russia. People who say this are disqualified right from the start."

Jacek also points out that his father came from the countryside, and if it hadn't been for the communists—who he is happy to admit made mistakes—his own fate would have been completely different.

But surely there's a possibility that a slowdown in the reforms will lead to less foreign investment, and then there won't be jobs like Jacek's for people like him? In reply, Jacek claims that the Polish economy was already being opened up in the late eighties and that the shock therapy of the Balcerowicz plan—named after the minister of finance in the Bielecki government whose creation it was—was a continuation of the reforms already started.

This election win does not mean that communism is coming back, he says. "It was social democrats and not communists who won the elections. And sometimes they're more liberal than the liberals."



# Omov

*(to be read in a slightly sinister Scots accent)*

Omov roamed the foyer with a glint
  inside his eye;
He was Eastwood, he was Boyer, with a
  hint of Captain Bligh;
He flexed his muscle slowly, and he
  pumped them by the hand,
For Omov, by what's holy, was a legend
  of his land.

*Omov scowling, Omov terse,*
*Omov in his polished hearse,*
*Omov with a careful curse,*
*Omov and his lips a-purse.*

Omov swept the party with a
  melancholic gaze;
He was hardly ever hearty, though
  perhaps this was a phase;
He blew his smoke rings coolly and they
  landed like lassos
Round the restless and unruly, for he did
  not like to lose.

*Omov prowling in the shade,*
*Omov always on parade,*
*Omov looking unafraid,*
*Omov with his eyes of jade.*

Omov strode the dais to the left and right
  and centre,
Where he'd hear a victim say his
  prayers, and call him a tormentor;
In each corridor and caucus, Omov
  paused for his applause,
And he left them looking glaucous as he
  pushed on through the doors.

*Omov howling in his dream,*
*Omov with an Omov scheme,*
*Omov full of chocolate cream,*
*Omov, captain of the team.*

Omov stood unruffled on the
  bunting-covered stage;
His audience had shuffled in to hear him
  turn the page;
Each red eye fixed on Omov as if stuck
  with Superglue;
While the houris at the home of Omov
  brewed his special brew.

*Bill Greenwell*



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The dissolved parliament was already discredited with most Russians. Boris Yeltsin's actions could herald a new era of genuine democracy, argues **Neil Melvin**

# Why the west must support Yeltsin

Ask almost any Russian whose interests the deputies in the Russian parliament represent, and you are likely to receive a short answer: their own. Fed by an openly pro-Yeltsin television service and a press with an insatiable appetite for scandal, for the past year and a half the Russian people have been exposed to a series of lurid stories about the deputies and their activities. Rumours about extravagant trips abroad and wild parties in the parliament are rife in Moscow. Russian television has often shown individual deputies casting votes for five or six others.

The deputies have not helped their case by recently voting themselves large pay rises, the right to privatise their valuable Moscow flats, and very generous pensions. Certainly most of Russian society is marred by corruption and chronic mismanagement; however, for most Russians the parliament had become a symbol of all that was wrong with Russia today. By the time Yeltsin took the dramatic decision to call new elections, parliament was already largely discredited as a political institution in the eyes of the Russian public.

With the majority of Russians largely indifferent to the fate of the parliament, should the international community be any more alarmed by recent events in Moscow? Western leaders have given encouragement to Yeltsin's actions, justifying their support on the basis of his commitment to accelerate economic reform. Opposition to his decision has focused on the allegedly undemocratic nature of the action and the fact that parliament spoke for many in society who were suffering under the rapid economic changes.

Both these positions are symptomatic of the misunderstanding that has characterised the international community's response to the current crisis in Russia. Yeltsin's actions deserve international support not because he and his team are committed to marketisation, but because his actions represent the first steps in the construction of a political system that will give Russian citizens much greater control of their own destiny.

The fundamental political problem in Russia today is not the struggle between parliament and the president, or between Thatcherite radicals and communists over economic reform. These are the symptoms of a much more deep-seated crisis: the disintegration of Russia's political system.

Political power and authority have disappeared into the chaotic muddle of decree and counter decree, of government policy and parliamentary policy, of central directives and regional directives. Amid this confusion, law has ceased to have any meaning, the black market has thrived and mafia-style organisations act with apparent impunity, gunning down opponents in scenes reminiscent of Chicago under mob rule.

To understand the importance of Yeltsin's move against parliament, his actions must be firmly situated in the context of a chronic political disintegration. The decision to call new elections is a significant move to reverse this trend.

The reason that parliament had to be dissolved was that it had lost touch with Russian society. Certainly, the deputies had some democratic credentials. They were elected in the freest elections in Russia for more than 70 years—but they were elections that took place in a society where the Communist Party remained pre-eminent. Many deputies were unopposed, while in contested districts the Communist Party could still rely on powerful local organisations to deliver a block vote. Above all, the elections were conducted at a time when many people were still afraid to vote against powerful local party bosses. As a result, the structure of parliament reflected more the interests of the party nomenclature than the Russian citizenry.

Since the deputies were elected, Russia has undergone fundamental social and economic changes. The fact that deputies sometimes expressed popular discontent with reform should not disguise the fact that they had little connection to the new realities of Russia. The majority of deputies had almost no regular contacts with their constituents, although they did court powerful local actors, and could hardly be considered representatives of their electors' interests. Deputies had power with no responsibility. They could obstruct and destroy with little regard for the consequences. They passed laws that could not be implemented and budgets that pumped billions of roubles into the economy, fuelling inflation, fostering capital flight and destroying pensioners' savings. These were not the actions of an institution aiming to protect the

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average person, but of one seeking to prop up their old allies running state enterprises.

Many of those who have been critical of Yeltsin have argued that he has acted unconstitutionally. In fact, the constitution long ago ceased to function in any meaningful manner. The current constitution is the Brezhnevite Soviet constitution, indeed the word Soviet appears frequently in the document.

Granted the power to make changes to it almost at random and largely unfettered by links to Russian society, parliament and the Congress of People's Deputies (from whose ranks the standing parliament is drawn) added hundreds of amendments, usually for their short-term political advantage and with no understanding of the concept of the rule of law.

**At each critical juncture, Yeltsin has chosen to put the question of Russia's future to the people**

At the same time as basing their constitutional authority on a Soviet era document, parliamentarians have been more than willing to condemn other decisions of the Soviet period. This summer the Russian parliament voted to reverse Khrushchev's decision to transfer the Crimea from the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation to the Ukraine in the 1950s. The justification put forward for their action being that they considered the Soviet system to be completely illegal.

In this confusion about what is democratic and undemocratic, lawful and unlawful, Yeltsin's claims to represent the Russian people are clearly far stronger than those of his opponents. Not only was he overwhelmingly elected by direct popular vote, but despite some erratic tendencies, his instincts are clearly democratic. At each critical juncture —the April referendum and now calling for elections in December —he has chosen to put the question of Russia's future to the people themselves. In this case, he has also been prepared to place his own political career on the line by calling early presidential elections.

**With both sides working within a single political system, normal politics may at last appear in Russia**

What then of the suggestion that the dissolution of parliament is simply a way of ignoring those who put themselves forward as the spokespeople of the weak and disadvantaged in Russia? If Yeltsin had called for unlimited, direct presidential rule this argument might have some force. But the imminent elections make a nonsense of this claim. The deputies who are popular will be re-elected, but this time with a much stronger claim to speak for their constituents. Indeed, parliament will be in a far more powerful position to temper the radical proposals of the government.

Opposition to government proposals will not necessarily mean a return to the internecine warfare that has characterised executive parliamentary relations in the past. Since both branches of government will have equal legitimacy, they will have to develop a *modus vivendi* based on compromise and accommodation, qualities that have been lamentably absent in Russian politics. Such compromises will probably involve both sides abandoning their respective utopias of full marketisation and a defence of massive state intervention in the economy. With both sides working within a single political system, normal politics may at last begin to appear in Russia.

This is not to suggest that enormous problems do not lie ahead. Not only must the period between now and the elections be negotiated peacefully, but the form and timing of the elections themselves will involve extremely complex negotiations. In the past, regional leaders have used the conflict between parliament and the executive to enhance their own position, offering their support for one side or the other in return for increased autonomy. Some areas may refuse to hold elections for a Russian parliament, notably Chechnia and Tatarstan, while others may well tack questions about independence from Moscow on to the ballot. The next great political task will involve integrating Russia's regions into the new political system —Yeltsin has proposed a new elected upper chamber for the parliament comprised of regional leaders—and to enshrine their relationship with Moscow in a new constitution.

Ironically, it may well be that Yeltsin himself will be the most significant casualty of this political struggle. Like Gorbachev before him, his greatest triumph may also mark his downfall. With his popularity sinking fast, and faced with an economy that shows little signs of improvement, Yeltsin may not survive the forthcoming elections. Whatever his personal fate, the process he has begun should be supported, for if successful, it will represent the first stage in the construction of a self-regulating political system in Russia. A system that can survive the demise of the person at the top will continue to function in a democratic fashion, and will reflect the interests of all rather than those of a narrow clique.

The international community's role in Russian politics can only be limited, and careful consideration must be given to the form that influence should take. Support for a policy based on the imposition of an idealised market economy through "shock therapy", is only likely to be met with resentment which may well take an anti-western form. On the other hand, unequivocal support for moves that will give the Russian people a real opportunity to determine their own fate, may well be the best method for fostering peace and stability in a potentially explosive situation.

*Neil Melvin is a research fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs*


DEMOCRATIC LEFT PRESENTS

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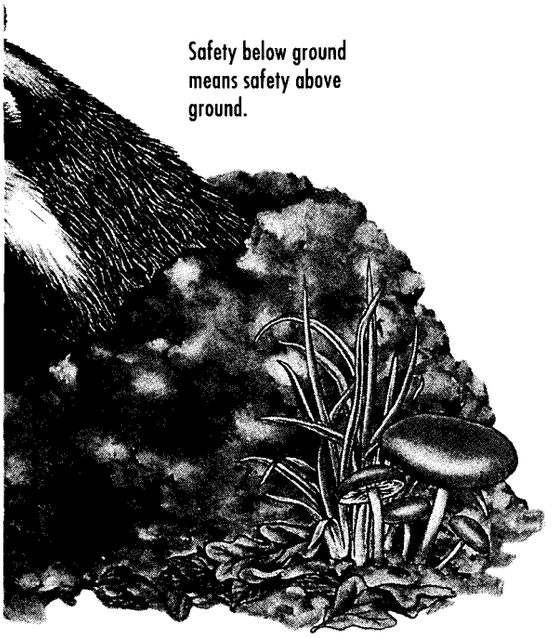
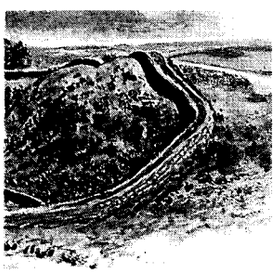
The Repository would be surrounded on all sides by hundreds of metres of rock, and there waste should remain, where Ice Ages can come and go with little effect.

Low-level waste, such as steel and rubble from the decommissioning of nuclear plants, will be packed into steel drums or boxes.

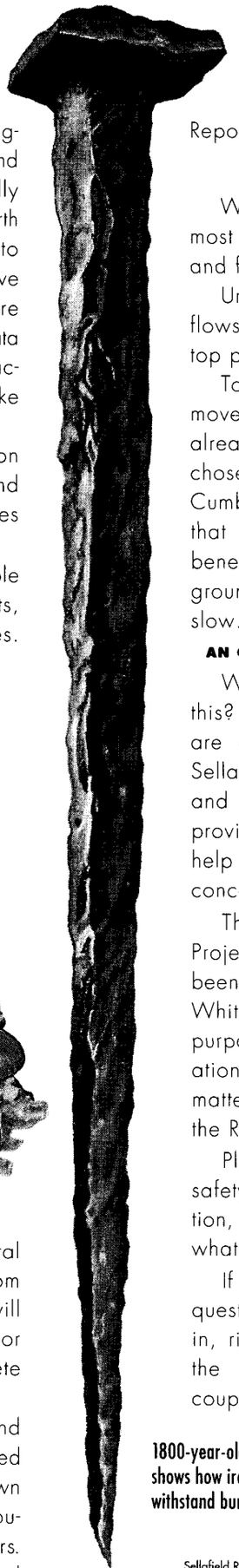


Safety below ground means safety above ground.

Intermediate-level waste, such as metal cladding, sludges, plastics and rubber from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel, will be concreted into stainless steel drums or steel or concrete boxes.



Concrete and other cement-based materials are known to survive for thousands of years. These were used in ancient China, Egypt and Greece. In fact this is one of their main purposes in the Repository.



1800-year-old Roman nail shows how iron and steel can withstand burial underground.

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Why are we telling you this? Because we know there are concerns surrounding the Sellafield Repository Project and it is our hope that by providing the facts we can help allay some of these concerns.

The Sellafield Repository Project Information Centre has been opened in Lowther Street, Whitehaven, with the sole purpose of providing information on request about any matter or issue which relates to the Repository.

Please do talk to us about safety, waste disposal, disruption, environmental issues, or whatever concerns you most.

If you have a specific question right now, either call in, ring us or write it down in the space provided in the coupon.

Sellafield Repository Project Information Unit is jointly staffed by United Kingdom Nirex Limited and British Nuclear Fuels plc.

If you have a question about any aspect of the Sellafield Project, please write it down in the space provided here and send it to: The Sellafield Repository Project Information Centre, Cumberland House, Lowther Street, Whitehaven CA28 7AH, or call us free on 0800 243 010.

| Name | | | | | Postcode |
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| Address | | | | | |
| My question is: | | | | | NS05 |

SELLAFIELD
REPOSITORY PROJECT INFORMATION CENTRE

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# The stay-at-homes hold sway

"We need you, Tony, more than ever," a delegate cried out after Tony Benn was voted off Labour's national executive. But as Benn himself admitted sadly, "Ballots speak for themselves."

Benn was elected to the national executive in 1959. In the years that followed, he renounced his peerage, served as a minister under Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan, fought against British membership of the Common Market and challenged Denis Healey for Labour's deputy leadership. He accepted defeat gracefully, accompanied by his wife Caroline and son Hilary.

For Benn, it was personal tragedy. But it also marked the end of the last few lingering traces of Bennism in the party. The battle between trads and mods has superseded the splits of the 1980s.

The "soft left", which was so subdued under Neil Kinnock, has reasserted itself at this conference. "If you want to see the future," Benn said, "look at what the people on the floor are saying." This was his comfort in defeat. But he was knocked off the national executive by Harriet Harman, who swept into second place in the constituency poll—and very nearly came first. Benn, with characteristic generosity, was the first to admit that she beat him outright, and not just as the top-scoring woman in the ballot.

Harman's arrival has given the modernisers extra firepower. Tony Blair increased his vote, despite his tough message on crime and uncompromising position on OMOV. Gordon Brown sank from third to last place, after a year of constant sniping at his economic policy. They both still have a respected ally in Kinnock, who picked up more than five million votes for the second year running.

The "soft-axis" of David Blunkett, Robin Cook and John Prescott remains dominant on the national executive when union representation is taken into account. In crude terms, however, the seven-member constituency section is now split 4-3 in the modernisers' favour. They will use the result to show that the party backs their reforming project.

The truth is more complicated. Party members are confused about the direction in which Labour should be moving. They believe Blair and Brown (the so-called "beautiful people") are great assets, particularly when it comes to selling the party to non-Labour voters, and they know that the next election cannot be won by preaching to the converted.

But they suspect that a dose of conviction politics would not only raise the party's morale, but also persuade others to join the cause. What those convictions might have been has been the subject of great debate in the conference hall.

The theme of the week in Brighton has been the defence of past gains and traditions. Delegates have been urged to defend universal benefits, to get back to full employment and re-adopt Keynesian economics. There were some barbed criticisms of Labour's economic policy from Tribune group secretary, Peter Hain and GMB leader John Edmonds.

Gordon Brown, forced on to the defensive himself, played up his commitment to full employment, to progressive taxation and to using "all" the instruments of macroeconomic management to stimulate the economy (the new mantra). At the opening of the conference, he published a pamphlet, *How we can conquer unemployment*, which echoes the title of Lloyd George's manifesto for the 1929 election, drawn up with the help of J M Keynes himself. Brown's message was clearly, "We are all Keynesians now."

On the floor of the hall, however, the view remained that Labour was bent on throwing out every last vestige of socialist commitment. The growing gulf between activists and the "modernising" membership of the constituency section of the NEC can be traced directly to the introduction of one member, one vote in the election process. The Skinners and Benns have gone and the Blairs and Browns have come in, because the choice rests with stay-at-home members, rather than party activists and officers.

**For Benn it was a personal tragedy. But it also marked the end of the few lingering traces of Bennism in the party**

Given that choice, they vote for people they see on television (six of the seven NEC constituency-section members are in the shadow cabinet). Dawn Primarolo, Labour's junior health spokesperson, was expected to do well, but polled only 58,000 votes, just over half Ken Livingstone's total. Though she is chair of the Campaign group, she has good relations with Tribune and the soft left. It is just that, in the wider world, no one has yet heard of her.

The anachronism is that left-wing conference delegates still have control over policy, if not personnel. But that, too, is changing. Just as OMOV has squeezed Benn ruthlessly off the NEC, so the conference itself is being subtly undermined and replaced by the national policy forums. In this interim stage, however, the conference still holds sway.

Yet, on some issues, the party leadership has been just as cautious as ordinary delegates. Before the conference opened, 200 people turned up at a fringe meeting to hear Bryan Gould, Ken Livingstone and Dawn Primarolo warn against collaborating with Tory attacks on the welfare state. "We've abandoned the principle of public ownership and full employment," said Gould, "but, until recently, we've managed to preserve the essence of our attitude towards social policy. Even if we fail lamentably over everything else, it is essential that we stand firm on this issue."

But Gould was preparing his last stand on an issue that the leadership was itself to declare sacrosanct. In Monday's debate on tax and benefits, the national executive recommended acceptance of two motions that specifically upheld Labour's commitment to the principle of universality. "There have been reports that our commitment to universal benefits has been wavering," said Joan Lestor on behalf of the NEC. "Our support for these composites should lay them to rest."

The welfare debate has not so much stopped in its tracks as rolled back. At the launch of the Social Justice Commission, John Smith declared his personal sympathy with universality, but said the Commission should be given free rein in its work. Nevertheless, he was jumped on then for saying as much as he did and restricting its terms of debate.

The Social Justice Commission has now been told in no uncertain terms not to tamper with pensions and child benefit. And a good thing too, you might well think. Labour should not be doing the Tories' dirty work. But already, the danger is that the Commission will be as cruelly marginalised and compromised as the Plant committee on electoral reform. In that case, why was it set up?

The Commission is already growing nervous about the timing of its final report. Should it be published before or after next year's conference? Will it be thrown out before its findings—whatever they may be—are given serious consideration? It is more interested in integrating tax and benefit systems than dropping universality, but what if that also sounds a touch too novel for delegates?

The Commission was conceived in the aftermath of defeat at the polls. At the time, Smith pledged that everything was open to challenge and scrutiny, and new thinking was needed. That has all gone by the board.

The conservative Labour Party has been in Brighton this week. If you want to see the future, as Tony Benn suggested, you may have to wait for another party conference.



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## SIDELINERS

**It is the worst mistake for a commander to underestimate his enemies. John Major will rue the day when he dismissed his most rebellious opponents as "barmy". While obsessively anti-EC, most are at least as intelligent as he and twice as well educated. And one has three times Major's capacity for anticipating monetary movements. He opposed Chancellor Lawson's over-inflating the economy, opposed Chancellor Major's entering the "half-baked" ERM, and warned Chancellor Lamont he would have to leave it and float sterling, many weeks before what he calls "White Wednesday" in September 1992.**

**This brilliant rebel is Nicholas Budgen, a bonsai version of Enoch Powell, whose seat he inherited at Wolverhampton SW in 1974, and whose views he replicates as a monetarist, right-wing nationalist and isolationist. This makes him anti-EC, anti-Maastricht and anti-intervention-in-Bosnia as well. He was dismissed as a "racist" by black MP Bernie Grant because, like Powell, he has long criticised the mass migrations into the Midlands from the sub-continent in the fifties and sixties, and the subsequent trickle of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi fiancés through arranged marriages. He was one of only six Tory MPs who voted against the Race Relations Bill in 1976.**

**Despite this, Budgen has a "cult following" on opposition benches. This is because this tiny barrister has a prosecuting intellect that respects ideas, but is no respecter of the humbug of the ego-swollen "great and good" on his own side. He turned against Heath for "debauching" the currency in 1972-74, and, with Brian Sedgemore, punctured Chancellor Lawson for over-inflating the money supply from 1985. One of the early enthusiasts for Mrs Thatcher in 1975, he still thought she would win in the second round in November 1990. But now he judges her "arrogant" and "half-mad", partly because of her enthusiasm for intervention in Bosnia.**

**It is because he is so cheekily uncompromising that he has never got beyond becoming an assistant whip for a few months in 1981-1982, unlike his Cambridge contemporaries and equals: Ken Clarke, Michael Howard, John Gummer, Sir Leon Brittan and Sir Norman Fowler. As an anti-EC obsessive, he has more in common with Peter Shore, whom he respects.**

**One can dislike Budgen's obsessions, but to dismiss so brilliant and rigorous an intellect as "barmy" demeans the Prime Minister, who is using more than insults to try to dislodge Budgen. Major's hulking Midlands whip, David Lightbown, is allegedly conspiring with Budgen's Majorite constituency chair, Roseanne Williams, to deselect him. It is not very wise for a prime minister to "needle" a man who plays the role of picador in parliament's bullfight. It might even help convert Budgen into a stalking-horse candidate next month, with the backing of anti-Maastricht rebels. As an experienced point-to-point rider, he may even stay in the saddle longer than John Major.**

*Andrew Roth*

## EDWARD PEARCE

# A veritable curate's egg of a conference, melancholia in one place, knots of thought and creation in another

It is the best of conferences; it is the worst of conferences. A brilliant fringe meeting called by the Commission on Social Justice, and involving Sir Gordon Borrie, Donald Dewar, Patricia Hewitt and Will Hutton, actually pushes the nose of the snow-plough up against the issues and approaches the indirect aspects of the solution. But even this interlude of coherent purpose is interrupted by an interminable mither from Jack Jones, whose affinity with the Harry Enfield Old Git defies belief.

There was also something approaching a shift of policy from Gordon Brown. All that banging on the head he has been getting from some of us, as the Lib Dems took up positions to the left of him, seems to have worked. He is talking good social democratic language again, daring to look at revenue options, and has abandoned the perfumed blur of his earlier, sound-bitten, three-times-shy, immoderate moderation. The leftward march back to Gaitskell is under way.

**Take a look at a little IPPR pamphlet "A New Agenda"—another pulse across the screen to suggest brain activity**

Incidentally, somebody must get hold of the things Gordon Brown is touching upon tentatively—stuff about corporate taxation —and nail them deep into the woodwork as policy.

The getting back of scandalously avoided corporate tax amounts to tens of billions of pounds. The take has fallen from 5 per cent of GDP to a fraction of 1 per cent across seven years. (All this flows from the CSJ fringe meeting and the ever-enlightening contributions of Will Hutton.) Even allowing for the fall in profits, we may be talking sums in and around half the PSBR.

At the serious, talk-and-think, end of the conference, such stirrings and arguings-through have been admirable. Take a look, by the way, at a little IPPR pamphlet *A New Agenda*, written by Nick Raynsford, Malcolm Wicks and friends—another pulse across the screen to suggest significant brain activity in the patient.

But Lord, away from these knots of activity and creativity, this can be a desolating conference. Samuel Johnson said of the author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*: "Sir, if you read Richardson for the story, you would hang yourself." The Labour story concerns Mr Smith's "decisive action", from masterful intervention, to an unnecessary slow-motion conflict with an otherwise innocuous trade-union movement, in order to embarrass the *Daily Mail* with his heroic modernity.

At the time of writing, this unresolved issue is the subject of every cliché—knife-edge, razor-edge, paper-thin, hanging by a thread, fighting for his political life, shoot-out at the corral—mind-enervating banality, known to the gin lapped fraternity of sub editors. If he wins, it will be a medium-sized and frayed impediment removed. If he loses, then he will have lost, lost very nigh everything. It was never worth the candle whose guttering grease has burnt Mr Smith's hand.

Labour's melancholic condition, away from those knots of thought and creation, is it seems, split between meretricious presentational gloss, and old, grim, plodding negativity. The floor debate is signally inferior to what was available at Torquay. Robin Cook and, this week, Gordon Brown (back on form) could lay on the brilliance—apart from another terrible *Jurassic Park* joke, but the floor was a succession of Scottish, Welsh and Northern resentments, real and true enough in the recession, but flavourless, ideal-less, reactive and dull. There were moments when it all sounded like a memorial service for the Timex workers of Dundee.

But there were failings on the platform, too. The quality of all the women members of the shadow cabinet, apart from Mo Mowlam, has been remarked upon. Ann Taylor's impersonation of a finger-puppet on the hand of Fred Jarvis, her mentor, was exceptional in its inadequacy, but all, bar Mo Mowlam, recall Thomas Beecham's crack about hiring third-rate foreign conductors, when we had so many second-rate conductors of our own.

The fear that Mr Smith is one of those second-rate conductors is not dissipated. His leadership seems at times like sleep interrupted with lightning. Writing on the morning of his speech, I merely expect a triumph. Mr Smith does debating triumphs, despite last year's modest sermon, with the facility of a milk-machine doing milk. But he must ultimately do something more difficult. He must choose between ideas and reflexes, the best of Labour and the worst.



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# LETTERS

**There's not too much space for letters this week—which is just as well, as most of the NSS postbag relates to John Smith's problems with Labour's procedure for selecting parliamentary candidates, which were about to be resolved as we went to press. Whatever has happened by the time you read this, the chances are that most of this correspondence is out of date.**

**Still, some of the more general points on the great one member, one vote debate are worth noting. Trevor Fisher of Stafford speaks for several letter-writers when he argues: "It is a sad commentary on the state of the Labour Party that, at a time of economic and social crisis unprecedented in Britain since 1945, it should have allowed its internal affairs to become more press-worthy than its plans for national revival—if it has any." And Norman Smith of Balham is not alone when he writes: "The whole row is absolutely ridiculous: the real problem with Labour's constitution is not the method for selecting candidates but the block vote at party conference, which is barely being addressed in Brighton."**

**There are plenty of warnings from both pro- and anti-OMOV camps of the dangers of this or that Labour relationship with the trade unions, all of which have been rehearsed ad nauseam in Brighton this week. But I was intrigued by the argument advanced by R P Tomsett of Chichester. "What happens if the Labour Party effectively separates itself from labour, which is what a breach with the unions means? Will the labour movement still feel that it must restrict itself to the parliamentary process to achieve its aims? Will the movement look for other ways?" Tomsett seems to be suggesting that a Labour-union divorce might lead to an upsurge in something like the revolutionary syndicalism of the Spanish CNT in the 1930s. If only the prospects were a quarter so romantic.**

*Paul Anderson*

## The thin Green line

In October 1972, a small group of people in the Midlands held a planning meeting which led to the formation of the Ecology Party (renamed the Green Party in 1985). By the time of the Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992, there were 98 green parties worldwide. Greens are present in local government throughout Europe, in many national parliaments, and are participating in a governing coalition in newly independent Slovenia. At present, substantial gains for green parties in Germany, Belgium and Italy seem likely in the European elections to be held in June 1994. In Britain, the decline in membership of the Green Party between 1991 and 1993 has been accompanied by a steady rise in representation on local councils to about 300 councillors, and the sharing of an MP, Cynog Dafis, with Plaid Cymru.

Despite the scale and diversity of the international green movement, there are those who, like Vicky Hutchings ("Green Gauge", 24 September) believe that green politics will die away or be absorbed by the traditional conservatisms of right, centre and left. It is not reasonable to expect consistent success for any one green party in any given country. Socialism in Europe is unlikely to die because of the recent rout of the French Socialist Party. Nor is it likely to die in Britain when most leading Labour politicians no longer subscribe to its most basic tenets.

Almost all journalists are too sympathetic to the causes of the major parties to offer anything resembling a critical analysis of them. Equally, an almost total absence of knowledge of the Green Party is hardly a basis for commenting on it. The recent Green Party conference at Hastings agreed a new, long-term strategy that places key social issues on a par with environmental issues. This is in line with what a great many Green activists actually do. As a democratic party, active party members can change policies and strategies. The constitutional arrangements in Conservative, Labour and Lib Demparties are very centrist, and obstruct policy change. Experience of canvassing over the past ten years suggests these parties are consistently behind many ordinary people in the perception of environmental threats. One Chris Smith, Simon Hughes or Richard Body, is not enough to make a party green.

David Pepper's *Ecosocialism* is a good statement of what might be, but there are many Labour activists and trade union leaderships who will resist radical policy change. If Labour was capable of serious policy change towards green politics, then why could so few Labour opponents of the resource-related Gulf war be found? Similarly, what use is it if the Liberal Democrats adopt greener policies, only to have them ignored by the fervent road-building tendency among their local councillors?

Green politics is about obtaining sustainability. This requires some elementary consistency in the pursuit of environmental necessities. It means greater equity in the sharing of our society's common resources. It means any political party that fails to do this has to be opposed until a new ecological consensus is fully established. The short-term and parochial concerns of the present major opposition parties explain why they have not dislodged the Conservatives: they do not offer a real alternative.

*Steve Dawe*
*Coordinator*
*Association of Kent Green Parties*

## Joining up?

We have been instructed by Councillor Colin Beadle, who is the Hackney Liberal Democrat leader on Hackney Council representing Haggerston ward.

Our client has advised us that *NSS* published the following statement in the issue of 24 September:

"Oh dear. It looks like Paddy Ashdown's belated investigation into the Tower Hamlets Lib Dems activities may have to widen its remit a little, following the news that the Hackney Council Lib Dem leader was nominated and proposed for his election to the local authority in 1990 by one Gary Russell. The embarrassing thing is that this is the same Gary Russell selected by the National Front leadership to organise on its behalf in the Hackney area at the same time. Even worse, it seems Russell was fairly open in his NF promotions, running the Hackney NF branch and distributing copies of NF News. So why did he propose and sign the nomination papers for a Lib Dem candidate? A secondhand form of entryism? Perhaps Labour's local government spokesperson, Jack Straw, wasn't too far off the mark when he said that parts of East London had become 'Paddy Ashdown's equivalent of Militant Liverpool in the eighties'."

Our client categorically denies any foreknowledge of Mr Russell's alleged political affiliations. At the election in 1990, our client's nomination form was rejected on the day before the deadline because one of the signatures was not in joined up writing. Our client was obliged to obtain 10 new signatures as otherwise his nomination would have been out of time.

It so happens that Mr Gary Russell together with some other constituents were in the Town Hall premises at the time when our client was attempting to obtain new signatures. They were there to lobby about their housing problems. Our client, who had advised Mr Russell and the others previously, therefore approached Mr Russell for his signature to the form and Mr Russell obliged.

We would therefore invite you to confirm by return that you will publish a retraction and apology to our client in your next issue which should contain confirmation that you accept that our client had no knowledge of Mr Russell's alleged political allegiances at the time of nomination, and that our client abhors fascism and racism and that the fact that Mr Russell signed our client's nomination form does not imply any link between our client and any fascist party.

*Clifford Watts, Compton*
*Solicitors*

*NSS is happy to accept that Mr Russell's name appeared on Mr Beadle's nomination paper because of his ability to do joined up writing and not because of his political views.*

## Freedom for Kashmir

India should spare the west any more crocodile tears over Kashmir. India's genocidal suppression over the past five years in Kashmir is indefensible, despite claims that the present



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struggle is a Pakistan-based and inspired conspiracy to wrest Kashmir from India. India has missed very few opportunities to portray the Kashmiris as fundamentalist and their struggle as communal. India has patently failed to do so, because it is not a religious struggle.

For a country claiming to be the world's biggest democracy, one wonders what values are being defended by over half a million Indian military and paramilitary forces deployed in Kashmir, other than having traumatised a traditionally peaceful people. It may have escaped your correspondent Randhir Singh Bains, "The Fight for Kashmir" (*NSS*, 17 September) that an estimated 40,000 Kashmiris have fallen victim to this army of occupation since 1989.

References are always made to the so-called accession of Kashmir to India in 1947 by Hari Singh, the despotic ruler of the state. But Indians conveniently forget the temporary and provisional nature of this accession and the reference to the people of Kashmir which was to have been made through a plebiscite under the auspices of the UN. Both India and Pakistan made solemn pledges that such a plebiscite take place in order to ascertain the wishes of Kashmiris for a final disposition of the state.

It is for this right to determine their own future that the people of Kashmir have decided finally to confront the Indian occupation and not because of Pakistan's involvement. The sooner both countries come to accept the futility of their conflict over Kashmir the better for not only the 13 million Kashmiris (Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists), but also for the entire sub-continent. A settlement of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people can provide a bridge of peace, prosperity and lasting friendship between the impoverished peoples of India and Pakistan.

*Zafar Khan*
*General Secretary in Britain*
*Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front*

## Secular Ulster?

Malachi O'Doherty suggests ("Beyond belief", 10 September) that the clergy in Northern Ireland are elevated in the media by default, not because people take them seriously.

But a recent survey conducted by the European Values Group at Tilburg University in Holland found that Ulster has the highest percentage of "deeply involved" church members of any region in western Europe, and more than any others they also believe that the churches should speak out on ethical and social issues.

O'Doherty also overlooks the fact that both the BBC and UTV are Christian organisations in a society where arguably a holy war is being fought. The sanitation of the horrors is therefore surely a deliberate policy, designed to give the false impression that the problem is only related to "the few bad men" and has nothing to do with the religious divide.

Secularisation *is* growing in Northern Ireland: recent surveys indicate that about 12 per cent have no religious affiliation. Yet in 25 years of the Troubles, not a single sceptical or humanist viewpoint has been allowed expression on either of our two local TV channels.

In a society where the churches still maintain such negative attitudes to mixed marriages, regular mixed worship and integrated schools, it is clearly a fundamental question whether they are actually part of the problem. Yet how on earth can this crucial issue be debated if only representatives and supporters of these churches are allowed to comment on it?

*Brian McClinton*
*Secretary*
*Ulster Humanist Association*

## THIS ENGLAND

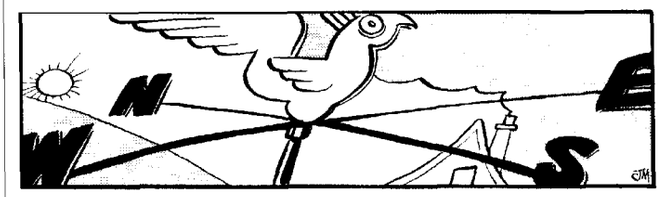
£5 for all entries printed below. Entries on a POSTCARD please

• Bananas have been banned by Warwick police from meals in the cells for fear that the skins could be used to trip them up.—*Sunday Mirror* (Amanda Welles)

• The fire brigade was called out to the man's second-floor flat in Rochdale road on Friday.

A fire brigade spokesman said they were told that the man was drying out the tea bags to clean his teeth.—*Oldham Evening Chronicle* (Gill Kirwan)

## FRINGE BENEFITS




**Colin Ward** contemplates the Hanseaticisation of Europe

The sign that welcomes you to Geneva is headed *République et Canton de Genève*, and is a reminder that some ancient city-regions struggled for centuries to hold on to their autonomy against the rampaging empire-builders all around. And I had been reading *en route* a report from the Brussels correspondent of the Italian weekly *L'Espresso*, Gabriele Invernizzi.

He says that a single adjective is used by economists, sociologists and political analysts, there and in Strasbourg, to describe what is emerging in Europe. The shorthand that the pundits use, he says, is *anseatico* or Hanseatic.

It refers back to the League formed for mutual protection in 1241 between Lubeck and Hamburg, subsequently stretching to London, Novgorod, Venice, Florence, and the Scandinavian ports. They were purely trading links, of course, but were the best challenge to nationalists and robber barons. Invernizzi and the Euro think-tankers use the word with a slightly exaggerated reverence for computerised telecommunications, as though the telegraph, the telephone and ticker-tape hadn't been around for a century.

But when you consider the disasters that the concept of the nation-state has brought this century, and the horrors it continues to produce today, it is worth listening to the people who conclude that the state is an anachronism, while the city-region is a non-lethal reality. Another new word is *forexscam*, referring to currency speculation. Why do we leave it to Edward Heath to point out that if we agreed on a common currency, as did the Hanseatic League, the parasites would be killed stone dead?

Our liveliest regional geographer, Peter Hall, has discovered Kropotkin's essay on *The State: its historic role* (in print from Freedom Press at £1.75) in which he argues that all through history there has been a Roman-imperialist-authoritarian tradition, challenged by a popular- federalist-libertarian tradition. Hall notes the "remarkable historical thesis" advanced by Kropotkin: that until the 16th-century triumph of the centralised state, a 12th-century "communalistic" revolution had saved European culture from theocratic despotic monarchies, and that "this revolution expressed itself both in the local village community, and in thousands of urban fraternities and guilds. In the late-medieval city, each section or parish was the province of an individual guild; the city itself was a union of these districts, streets, parishes and guilds."

And Hall goes on, in his book *Cities of Tomorrow*, to resurrect the propaganda of one of Kropotkin's colleagues, the Scottish biologist Patrick Geddes, after the first world war. He believed that the League of Nations "should be a league of cities . . . of the great provincial cities that, regaining their former independence, would then voluntarily federate on a Swiss model."

The fact that this kind of language is completely beyond our political imagination simply shows how enslaved we are to the concept of the nation-state. The UK is an anachronism, but all politicians have a vested interest in its survival as the most centralised nation in Europe. Public revenues are totally controlled by the Treasury in Whitehall, and even the boundaries of local authorities are being redrawn in secret by government ministers. Even the Brussels bureaucrats are embarrassed through finding that the funds they want to vote for regional regeneration can't be filtered through regional bodies because our government has determined that we should have none.

Looking for the shape of 21st-century Europe, Invernizzi headlines his findings: "The future? It's the City-State." This might be true for Catalonia, Baden-Würtemburg, Rhône-Alps or Lombardy, but it isn't for the West Midlands, south Wales or Strathclyde, taking their orders from a government machine that even their voters have rejected.



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C P Snow (right) opening a new building at the National Physical Laboratory in 1965

The squabble between a scientific scribbler and a rancid literary critic raged over three decades ago. But, says **Pat Coyne**, the message is still fresh

# Two cultures revisited

Who these days has heard of C P Snow? For those over 40 there may be faint memories of a shambling, minor novelist and sometime junior member of the first Wilson government. Some may remember him as married to the (much better) novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson, and a few may also recall him as the originator of the phrase that has long since outlived him, "the two cultures"—in short, quintessentially a dead white European male.

And yet, they came to jeer and stayed to cheer. Reading, for the first time, the 1959 Rede lecture in which Snow elaborated on the ideas of the two cultures, first put forward in the *New Statesman* in 1956, was a surprising, even, dare I say it, stimulating, experience.

First, it is remarkable how much of its essential message remains relevant. True, there is some comparison between British, American and Soviet scientific education that is by now dated, and there is, also, rather too much technological optimism for modern taste. But the essential insight, that of a conscious—or at least semi-conscious—mutual rejection of the ideas and modes of thought of two elites, "comparable in intelligence, identical in race, not grossly different in social origins" remains at least as true today as it was in 1956. Second, there is the moral dimension that Snow gave science, and in particular, what he saw as its moral superiority to literary culture. The third, perhaps even bigger, surprise, given Snow's literary reputation and the neglect into which his other works have fallen, is the vigour and clarity of his argument. There is more than a touch of J B Priestley in Snow's prose. Workmanlike, pithy and occasionally graphic, it compares favourably with the writings of many of the commentators on the two cultures theme.

In a new edition of *The Two Cultures*, published this week (Canto, CUP, £5.95), the historian of ideas Stefan Collini looks at the historical context into which Snow's ideas fit. It was clear that Snow was looking for, and found, some simple formulation that summed up what he, originally a research chemist, later a writer, had experienced in meeting and talking with people from both backgrounds.

*For constantly I felt I was moving among two groups—comparable in intelligence, identical in race, not grossly different in social groups, earning about the same incomes, who had almost ceased to communicate at all, who in intellectual moral and psychological climate had so little in common that instead of going from Burlington House or South Kensington to Chelsea, one might have crossed an ocean.*

The notion of some sort of divorce between the arts—particularly literature—and science has its roots in the Romantic era at the end of the 18th century. Before that, the intellectually conscious tended to be encyclopaedic in taste. But Snow was describing not simply a parting of the waves, but a sidelining of scientists, quoting the great Cambridge mathematician, G H Hardy.

*I remember Hardy once remarking to me in mild puzzlement, some time during the 1930s: "Have you noticed how the word 'intellectual' is used nowadays? There seems to be a new definition which certainly doesn't include Rutherford or Eddington or Dirac or me."*

Snow's response was to counterattack:

*A good many times I have been present at gatherings of people who, by the standards of the traditional culture, are thought highly educated and who have, with considerable gusto, been expressing their incredulity at the illiteracy of scientists. Once or twice I have been provoked and have asked the company how many of them could describe the second law of thermodynamics. The response was cold: it was also negative. Yet I was asking something which is the scientific equivalent of: Have you read a work of Shakespeare's?*

Not only was "traditional culture" abysmally ignorant, it was morally questionable, too. Snow does not say so directly; he leaves it in the form of a question asked by a colleague, but the implication is there.

*I remember being cross-examined by a scientist of distinction. "Why do most writers take on social opinions which would have been thought distinctly uncivilised and démodé at the time of the Plantagenets? Wasn't that true of most of the famous 20th-century writers? Yeats, Pound, Wyndham Lewis, nine out of ten of those who have dominated the literary sensibility in our time—weren't they not only politically silly, but politically wicked? Didn't the influence of all they represent bring Auschwitz that much nearer?"*

Harbingers of the gas chambers? That's one in the eye for the literary set. No wonder Snow attracted criticism from right across the cultural spectrum. They attacked him for, among other things, being parochial—English—and for oversimplifying.

There is, as Collini admits, a particular, English, dimension to the debate, and an English elite at that. "He was ultimately less interested in public debate than what went on behind closed doors."

The debate goes back at least as far as the controversy between T H Huxley and Mathew Arnold. Huxley championed the role of science as part of culture, and as a training for the mind at least the equal of the classics. Arnold responded by subsuming the great works of science, Newton's *Principia* and Darwin's *Origin of Species,* into "literature", while still maintaining that the essence of the culture was literature, especially that of the Greeks and Romans.

In their relatively good-natured fashion, Huxley and Arnold prefigured the much less seemly row between Snow and F R Leavis. For Leavis, considered by some to be the foremost—if not the only real—literary critic of his day, controversy always seemed in the end to boil down to *ad hominem* vituperation. "Snow is as intellectually undistinguished as it is possible to be"; and for good measure,



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"the intellectual nullity is what constitutes any difficulty there may be in dealing with Snow's panoptic pseudo-cogencies." As for Snow's literary merit, "as a novelist he doesn't exist".

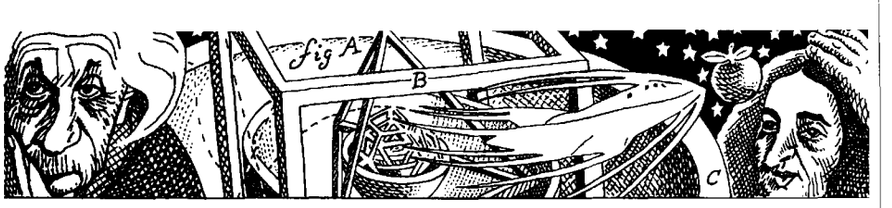
For Leavis, much of literature of the past 150 years had been concerned with the evils of industrialisation. For Snow, this smacked of elitism. The poor had always voted with their feet and flocked to the factories. Science, industrialisation and progress were intimately connected. And literature, which appealed to the emotional, the irrational and, by extension, the darker side of our nature, was ultimately reactionary—bringing Auschwitz nearer.

Snow was criticised, too, for conflating English literature with literature in English. As Collini points out: "'English literature' is now only one of the literatures in English, the one with the longest and richest history perhaps, but a minor presence in the contemporary world and not obviously destined to be the most creative or significant in the next century. Instead of Snow's research physicist and literary critic encountering mutual incomprehension over the second law of thermodynamics and the plays of Shakespeare at a Cambridge High Table, the emblematic figures representing the relations between his 'two cultures' at the end of the 20th century should perhaps be a Singapore-Chinese economic analyst E-mailing her American software-designer boyfriend about the latest Afro-Caribbean poet to win the Nobel Prize for literature."

We could be getting a little over-multicultural—rather than two-cultural—here, but let it pass. As for the charge of over-simplification, the name of the game is cultural relativism. Scientific knowledge, so the line goes, is itself dependent on culturally variable norms and practices. Science is merely one set of cultural activities among others, as much an expression of society's orientation to the world as its art or religion and equally inseparable from fundamental issues of politics and morality. Some feminists, for example, have argued for the gender-specific nature of the ideals of control and impersonality enshrined in science, and have attacked the "masculinist" bias of the conception of rationality to which the ideology of science appeals.

A world without masculine rationalists. Now there's a thought. There is no question that Snow's simple optimism and easy equation of science with progress is hardly tenable today. Pollution, nuclear weapons, video nasties—you name it, science is blamed for it. And yet, as Collini argues, science can also provide the answers to the problems it creates. There is a "dialectic" by which the extension of scientific control and an increasing anxiety about its effects are tied to each other. To that extent, at least, science is social relations, and a degree of relativism obviously colours the two cultures argument. Yet, perhaps, the process has gone too far. Maybe we need to recast the debate in the simple terms of a Snow. He may not have known that much, but he knew what he knew.

# DIELECTRICS




## **Pat Coyne** on the hidden masses of the Universe, and the contest between WIMPs and MACHOs

Connoisseurs of acronyms have been much amused this week by the battle between the MACHOs and the WIMPs for the title of missing mass of the Universe: the ultra heavy-weight contest of (literally) all time.

It is possible to estimate the masses of galaxies, and, by extension of the Universe, by estimating the number of stars and making allowance for the interstellar gases. It is also possible to do the same thing by observing the gravitational effects of galaxies on each other, and then calculating their masses. The problem is that the second answer is bigger than the first by a factor of about ten. Since gravity is the one force of nature that it is impossible to buck, the general assumption is that the second answer is right. So where is the missing mass we cannot see?

A number of possible answers have been suggested, of which WIMPs and MACHOs are prime candidates. It all boils down to a contest between boring, normal matter and something very exotic indeed. First, the boring candidate. MACHOs are the Peter Pans of the stellar world, stars that never grew up. Stars condense out of interstellar gas. As they condense they get hotter and, providing they are big enough, the core eventually becomes hot enough to start a nuclear reaction, turning hydrogen nuclei into helium, and the star starts to shine. If the mass is not sufficiently large, the nuclear reaction never starts and we have a lukewarm sub-stellar object, a so-called "brown dwarf".

Since they do not shine, brown dwarves are hard to see. They might, however, be detected when they pass in front of a normal star. According to General Relativity, the star's light should be slightly bent by the brown dwarf and the effect would be rather like a giant lens, focusing the light and making the star appear brighter. Hence MACHO, or massive atrophysical compact halo object, a strained acronym if ever I heard one. Last week, David Bennett, an astronomer at the US Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, claimed to have detected such a brightening. Whether this was a MACHO—and whether they are out there in the untold billions necessary to account for the missing mass—remains to be seen.

WIMPs, by contrast, are the Pharisees of the sub-nuclear world, not at all like other particles. The name stands for weakly interacting massive particles; and the main point about them is that, if they exist at all, they will be almost impossible to detect, except by their gravitational effects.

There is a precedent for WIMPs—the neutrino, a light, weakly interacting particle, whose existence was first mooted when scientists discovered anomalies in the energies involved in radioactive beta decay (when the nucleus emits an electron). At one stage, they were so puzzled that they contemplated abandoning the law of conservation of energy, a step rather like those Church of England clerics who have ceased to believe in God. In the 1930s, Wolfgang Pauli suggested that the anomaly could be cleared up if there was another particle involved, which he dubbed a neutrino. The neutrino would be electrically neutral, and so weakly interacting that it could pass through a wall of lead several light years thick without being stopped. That explained why nobody had detected it.

Eventually the neutrino was detected. It may have a very small mass, a tiny fraction of the next lightest particle, the electron. If so, neutrinos may make up the missing mass of the Universe. There are, however, much more exotic candidates, including WIMPs, axions and magnetic monopoles.

Axions are very light particles that seem to be required by esoteric theories concerning the way nature distinguishes between right and left. (The discovery that there is a fundamental handedness to nature came as a huge surprise in 1956, and won its discoverers a Nobel prize within a year.) Magnetic monopoles are the equivalent of electrically charged particles, like the electron, whose flow is familiar as electricity.

Single magnetic poles have never been detected. They always come in twos, which is why if you break a bar magnet, you get two magnets each with its own north and south poles. However, the latest grand unified theories (GUTs) seem to require magnetic monopoles to exist. If they do, they are likely to be billions of times heavier than the average atom, and might give you a start if you bumped into one.

WIMPs, if they exist, would be like massive neutrinos. They would have been produced in the Big Bang and hung around since, doing nothing very much, on account of being weakly interacting: drones, you could say. There is a variety of possible WIMPS, with names like photino, wino, zino, squark and selectron. They are related to the Higgs particle, of Waldegrave champagne fame (Dielectrics, 16 July). Their putative existence leaves us contemplating the irony that matter itself—everything we can see, feel, hear, taste—may be a minor part of a Universe, most of which is fundamentally undetectable.



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Anastasia Hille and Rory Edwards in Thérèse Raquin/Stephen Vaughan

Why shouldn't gesture, design and music be as telling as language in the theatre? **David Jays** wants to have it all

# The primacy of passion

Immured behind glass, Thérèse Raquin knots a vast cat's cradle of green twine, as hemmed-in as she was by her loveless marriage. An ominous soundtrack clanks and moans to mark the brutish union with her lover, Laurent. The husband they have murdered returns to haunt them, shuddering through their bed, squelching down the walls, squatting toad-like in the corner.

Julia Bardsley's version of Zola introduces audiences at the Young Vic to what they might expect from her direction (shared with Tim Supple) of a theatre that, under David Thacker, has made a name for performances of Arthur Miller, and of Shakespeare and Ibsen presented as Milleresque explorations of decency and dignity under siege. Similar changes are predicted at the Royal Court and Lyric, Hammersmith, as Stephen Daldry and Neil Bartlett prepare to take artistic control; and it may be this concrete authority that has provoked critics like the *Guardian*'s Michael Billington to yelp at what he describes as the "anti-intellectual modishness" of a theatre where gesture, design and music can be as telling as language.

So what is this barbarian "visual theatre"? It's a canard, of course. Theatre is text made visible, tangible—if you want non-visual theatre, well, that's why God invented the wireless. In heritage-conscious Britain, however, the authority of the word is entrenched, and attempts to question its dominance are labelled directorial "imposition" on the text—imposition, unmannerly, unseemly.

Starving our sense of the visual is puritanically self-denying, and so too is distaste at the melodramatic, operatic nature of the drama these directors produce: Bardsley suggests that the British are "embarrassed by theatricality, by emotional expression—by art, basically". The way in which our bodies function at the extremes of desire, violence or disease is an urgent question of our age—on the big-screen, serial-killers jostle with vampires, and various Frankenstein's monsters are already preparing to lumber towards us, patchworks of limbs, of organs and of all our confusion about what galvanises them. Visual theatre can loosen the performer's body, allowing it to become as expressive as voice.

If *Thérèse Raquin* does not quite come off, the performers' over-effortful movement is admittedly a factor. Bardsley's cast is not always equal to her demands, though Anastasia Hille describes a thrilling shift from lank, shuffling wife, her voice rusty with disuse and barely able to register her own discontent, to wall-thumping sensualist, abandoned to vulpine laughter. After the murder she obsessively circles her memories, a compass circumscribed by the tail of her dank green velvet dress.

A filmy anatomist's glove nestles in the programme, for Zola's novel is a concentrated excision beneath the skin of crushing mundanity. Its intensity is not doggedly realistic—quotidian detail is stripped away or caricatured, unlike the exhaustive tracing of animalistic passions. Bardsley, with Aldona Cunningham (sets), Christopher Toulmin (lighting) and Andrew Poppy (music), captures this perfectly, when Thérèse's pooterish family parades in a grimly jovial jumble of chairs and tea-cups to a waggish accordion; or when her husband's body bobs in the morgue as in a murky fishtank; or, best of all, when Thérèse and Laurent, sundered by their guilt, argue behind rain-streaked glass, habitual slanging drowned in the downpour.

This is a beautifully cinematic image, and when the glass-fronted stage opens up, it is as if we are panning into the room. It points to another vital component of visual theatre—that, thanks to film and television, audiences have become immensely sophisticated in reading images, in constructing a narrative through them. The diversity, the buzz, the edginess of contemporary culture should be celebrated when snatched by the magpie theatre, a form that can defy the fixity of film and re-invent itself with every performance.

Melodrama, in its high Victorian incarnation, was spectacular form: opera, of course, still is. Both insist on the primacy of passion, whether love or hate, getting laid or getting even. Billington dismisses this drama's concerns as if genre and sexuality, the social accommodation of the heart, were not among today's most problematic political questions. Michael Finnissy, whose operatic treatment of *Thérèse Raquin* tours this autumn, claims



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that his work is unsensational, focused inwards; but a theatre in which words become as physical and tangible as deeds is well-equipped for public exploration of the heart's darker corners. And perhaps, in the age of the soundbite, as a rolling news service promises to peddle us partial truths without respite, language is blunted as a discursive tool. Certainly Paul Blackman, director of the Battersea Arts Centre's Festival of Visual Theatre suggests that artists, tired of "winning the arguments and losing the battle", have redirected their energies, while Bardsley, lamenting our "terrible lack of culture, everything is so bleakly conservative", seeks to reclaim the arts as "a place where things can be embarrassing or shocking".

A theatre of excess is a defiant response to straightened times, expending in emotion what the state pares off in funding. Neil Bartlett's company Gloria has explored that aesthetic, taking vivid texts by Balzac, Jean Rhys and Ruth Rendell in lush and spiky directions. His production earlier this year, with Mike Alfreds, of Marivaux's *The Game of Love and Chance* was dismissed by snitty critics as "camp". It was, and that was its strength—camp defined as simultaneously heightened self-consciousness and emotion.

Aching to scream your head off without having to look over your shoulder, to move expansively, to dress up and be damned, are all tempting in a timorous culture, and the theatre provides a space to project the excesses of unfulfilled desire. The unsettling relish of queer theatre is increasingly broadening its appeal; so too is dance. The most covertly queeny of art forms has, with troupes such as Adventures in Motion Pictures and the Edinburgh-feted Mark Morris Company, sashayed joyously from the closet.

Excess swings into poetic austerity with Bardsley's favourite British dramatist. Howard Barker (celebrator of the unassimilable artist in *Scenes from an Execution*), whose language is almost tactile, at once flinty and fleshy. "It is not to insult an audience to offer it ambiguity," is a typical Barker dictum, and performers and directors seem to relish his challenges to interpretation. A more familiar stream of British political writing appears this week when representatives of the Three Estates step out at the National Theatre to worry over church, law and government in *The David Hare Trilogy*. The first two plays, previously performed, lack the theatrical jolt of Hare's bold morality play, *The Secret Rapture*, which showed goodness flailing in the sharp-faced 1980s, but their scope is broad, their debate finely worked.

And, yes, the text is predominant. But why should we have to choose? Richard Eyre, the National Theatre's artistic director, feels no need to—he is producing the Hare plays, but also invites Bardsley, Bartlett and Theatre de Complicité to the South Bank. Theatre's great strength is its admission of diverse voices, diverse bodies. Why stop our ears or cover our eyes?

*"Thérèse Raquin" continues at the Young Vic until 6 November*

**Jonathan Romney** on why overspiced Mexican films don't agree with him

# Eating her gut out

**Dish of the Day: Tita (Lumi Cavazos) with her feckless lover Pedro (Marco Leonardi)**

The press kit for *Like Water For Chocolate* comes complete with menus for such delights as hot chocolate (using three different varieties of bean), Chabela wedding cake, and quails in rose petal sauce ("Twelve roses, preferably red . . . "). It also tells you how to make your own matches ("One ounce of powdered potassium nitrate, one dram of phosphorus"), in case you're so frustrated by fruitless grappling with the quails that you feel like setting the whole thing alight.

It's all considerably more appetising than Alfonso Arau's film. Based on the bestselling novel by Laura Esquivel, who's adapted it here, this Mexican schlockbuster—which has grossed over $15 million in the US—is an example of that rare but eccentric genre, the food movie. The genre seems to exist less on screen than in the pages of lifestyle magazines, which celebrated it amply during its peak in the 1980s. In theory, the label covers everything from gourmand fancies like the silver-service slap-up pomp of *Babett's Feast* to the more snack-like ingenuity of the Japanese "noodle Western" *Tampopo*, to more dyspeptic horrors like *La Grande Bouffe* and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*.

By rights, food movies should be the most subversive genre going, because they express the Great Repressed of cinema—the fact that people actually eat, even though they rarely do in films. No one pointed up better the implications of this odd taboo than Luis Buñuel, in the famous scene that had elegant party-goers sitting round on toilet bowls, then discreetly repairing to little cubicles to feed themselves in privacy. The sheer versatility of food as metaphor for all human activity was never better celebrated than in Juzo Itami's portmanteau *Tampopo*, which packed in food and sex, food and death, food and metaphysics, the lot, appetisingly presented in bite-size packages for cinematic grazers.

But food movies can often be self-congratulatory in a peculiarly cloying way. Imagine a chef laying a sumptuous *pièce de résistance* before a banquet—the spectacle on the platter actually presents itself as the perfect metaphor for the diners' desire. It claims to anticipate exactly what your appetites are, and to reveal those appetites to you in all the glory of their ambition—it's the consummate celebration of your cravings, and because it is, it immediately belittles you, puts you in awe of it; it becomes too good to touch.

That's what's wrong with *Like Water For Chocolate*. Most obviously, it presents food in a spectacular, showy way, with all the schmaltzy, over-glazed sumptuousness of a bad-taste patissier's window. But it also congratulates itself for its aptness in representing the forces of desire and the pleasures of appetite. Set during the Mexican revolution of 1910, it's the story of a family whose matriarch, the fearsome widow Elena, has condemned her youngest daughter to a life in the kitchen, watching her older sister steal the feckless man she loves. Tita therefore sublimates her desires, making a series of dishes that, miraculously, are the perfect translation of her feelings and communicate them directly from heart to gut.

The wedding cake she makes for her lost Pedro and her sister contains a few shed tears, and induces fits of vomiting in the assembled crowd, in would-be Rabelaisian scenes of communal discomfort that compare unfavourably with the massed farting cowboys in *Blazing Saddles*. And when she projects her passion into the quails in rose petal sauce, she brings about an outbreak of satyriasis, pandemic swooning and spooning, eventually causing her older sister Gertrudis to be carried away naked on horseback by lusty revolutionaries (all the more unsettling because the woman's a dead ringer for the Duchess of York).

What's irksome about these episodes is not just that they're predictable and schematic, but that, in their set-piece bombast, they represent themselves as being the perfect correlative to the feelings they represent—just as the dish aspires to being perfectly adequate to the appetite. For sorrow, tainted wedding



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cake, for passion, quails and roses—it could hardly be a neater fit, and the comic consequences just naturally follow. There's a terrible, automatic obviousness about the imagery, symptomatic of the fag-end of magic realism, which, at its worst, tends to look for the single "miraculous" image that conveys its meanings transparently. Hence the awful contrived moment when we at last see the shawl that Tita's been knitting all through the years of her bitterness, and that of course trails after her wagon for miles and miles . . .

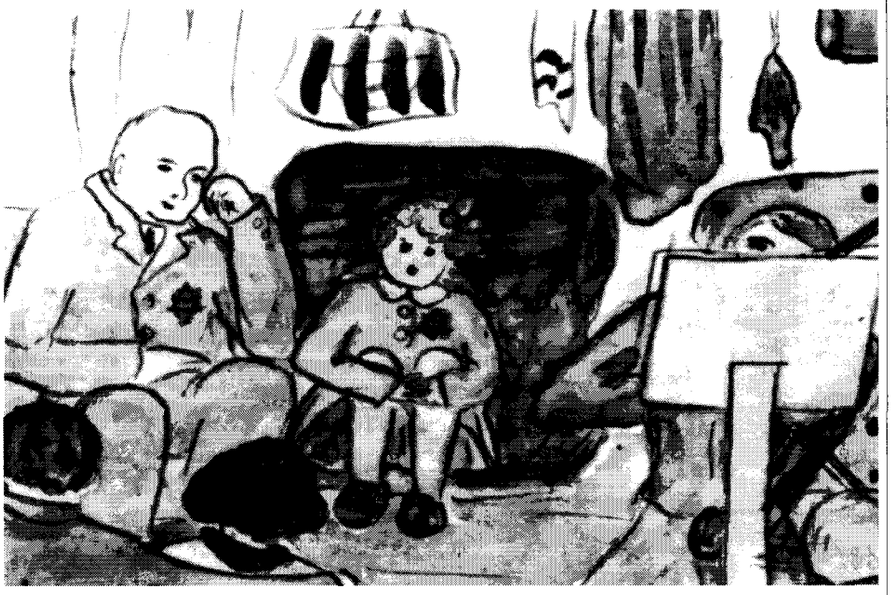
There's no irony in these images—which may explain the astounding success at the US box office of something that in most other ways looks like an archetypal "art film". The film is mired in unashamed, literal kitsch, in stilted soap-opera acting and music, and Mills and Boon cinematography (Arau tries to convey an air of story foreboding by low-lighting the film so that it looks as if it's actually been steeped in chocolate).

The worst moment for me, when I saw it at the Latin American Film Festival, came when one of the wise old grannies and trusty female servants who appear throughout gave a little smile and snort of benevolent approbation, and someone sitting near me gave a similar snort in return. The film does indeed ask you to concur in its cosy hearth-side wisdom, which it presents as being passed down by grannies and servants from time immemorial—and with all these faithful family retainers around, there's a terrible ring of *Upstairs, Downstairs* about it. The recipes are apparently completely authentic and handed down from generation to generation in the Esquivel household.

In the final scene, a modern-day woman sits in her own kitchen winding up the story for us, as phantom matriarchs look on approvingly. But this insistence on timelessness and tradition makes it seem as though the Mexican revolution and 80 years of subsequent history had left no traces, other than a shaggy-dog love story and a fancy poultry dish. But then, there are few cultural productions more suspect than "traditional" cuisine. *Like Water* comes across as ready-to-serve exoticism, like a restaurant that slaps the word "authentic" all over its menu to show that it's catering for an exclusively tourist market (this feeling subsists even if, as may well be the case, the film was made primarily for a domestic market).

Maybe Mexican food doesn't agree with me, or maybe it just doesn't agree with cinema. Certainly there's something cloying and over-spiced about the dishes Tita prepared—they're drenched in metaphoric sauce. Maybe Mexican food really is this rich in metaphor—Italo Calvino certainly thought so, but then his own culinary Mexican travelogue, a story called "Under the Jaguar Sun", was the worst thing he ever wrote, a humourless victim of its own taste for exoticism.

May I recommend instead Richard Rodriguez's Tex-Mex budget dish *El Mariachi*, still on the circuit—guacamole straight up, and infinitely more nutritious.



**The Music of Terezín: Helga Weissova Hoskova's "Concert in the Barracks"**

**Roderic Dunnett** on a musical hole in the middle of the 20th century

# The music of time

Most centuries have suppressed art. Ours has done better than most. Russia's avant-garde musicians—Roslavets, Prokofiev and, nearly, Shostakovich, were hounded, virtually or literally, to the grave.

Hitler had his own methods. Recently an exhibition, 50 years on, revived the *Entartete Kunst* ("Degenerate Art") show mounted in Munich in 1937 by the Nazi regime. The resurgence in this country of painters like Otto Dix relates directly to this process of disinterment.

Music fared no better—the Nazis even staged an *Entartete Musik* in Dusseldorf a year later. Now Decca has just launched a series under that title, focusing on composers whose works were pilloried or banned by Nazism. Many, like Schoenberg, Korngold and Kurt Weill, fled to America or Britain. Not all were Jews, Hindemith being a classic example.

There is a cultural hole in music in the middle of the 20th century. In Paris, America and, to a lesser extent, England, movements kindled, major works emerged. But, in central and eastern Europe, a lot got lost.

Tomorrow night, *The Music of Terezín*, a 70-minute documentary on BBC2, will seek to right some of these wrongs. Terezín, a Joseph II fortress town 60 kilometres north of Prague, with its star-shaped Hanseatic battlements, became the Nazi transit camp Theresienstadt, a holding point for numerous Jews pending transfer "east" to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Occasionally it was used as a showpiece. In the summer of 1944, a deputation from the International Red Cross visited. A propaganda film was later made to depict the travesty of daily life there: busy streets, full cafés, and a flourishing cultural life. Yet curiously, cramped and starved as the town was, with families squashed into cellars, corridors and attics, culture did flourish. From 1942, it was even sponsored by the Nazis, through their nominal ghetto administration, the Council of Jewish Elders.

As the film's director, Simon Broughton, points out: "The irony is that, culturally, Terezín was the freest place in occupied Europe." There was jazz (in Nazi eyes, about as "Entartete" a kind of music as you could get); cabaret; pioneering children's operas; a spate of chamber and orchestral activity.

Many of the composers, born at the turn of the century, were significant figures in their own right. Yet until recently, with the odd exception, their works have been largely ignored. Viktor Ullmann, a Schoenberg pupil who wrote three operas, songs, a piano concerto, quartets and seven sonatas (the last, of symphonic proportions; his sixth, even more powerful) was a pre-war conductor at the Prague Opera under Zemlinsky. Some 20 of Ullmann's works date from his time in Terezín. On his own admission, he flowered there.

His compact *Variations and Fugue after Schoenberg* (1929) could be 1960s Henze or Maxwell Davies. His opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, a witty, transparent pastiche of Hitlerism, was banned by the SS after its dress rehearsal. Ullmann and other musicians disappeared from Terezín only weeks later, in October 1944, when 23,000 were deported.

*The Emperor of Atlantis* is a latterday *Everyman* Harlequinade, a masterly descendant of Expressionist satire, of the genre that spawned



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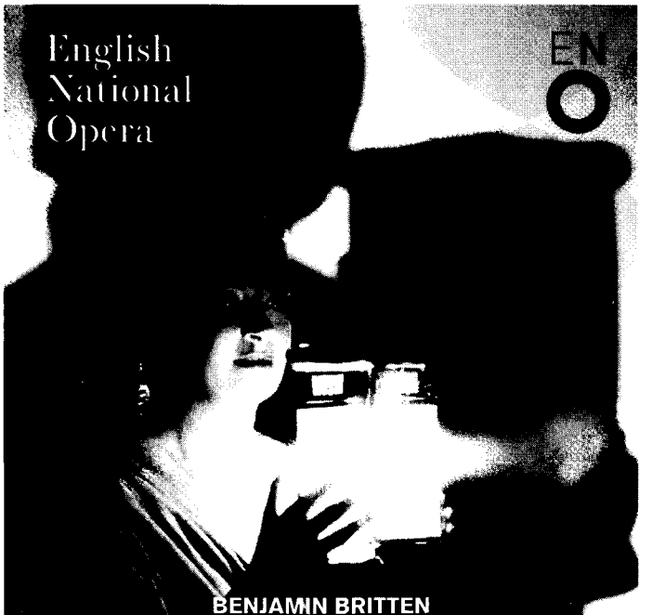

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

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Hindemith's stage works and Brecht's *Arturo Ui*. German anthems are parodied. Uncannily, some of Ullman's lushest music is reserved for Death ("Der Gärtner", "Tod"). Karel Berman, who sang the original role, survived to be interviewed, tellingly, in Broughton's film. The opera can be seen at the South Bank this Thursday, 7 October.

Gideon Klein, still in his early twenties, had just started to find his authentic voice in Terezín. Czech folk music pervades his *String Trio*; his concentrated *Piano Sonata* gives the clear feel of an original mind at work, synthesising post-Schoenberg atonalism with a Bartókian terseness.

Pavel Haas, somewhat older, had studied with Janácek in Brno. His *Study for String Orchestra* (a performance by Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic helped fuel the current Radio 3/South Bank series), was written in Terezín. His *Songs from the Chinese*, with their wistful sense of irony, could be Mussorgsky or late Shostakovich.

Arguably most interesting is the idiosyncratic Hans Krása, whose *Tanec* ("dance") for string trio gives a tantalising hint of those central European ingredients that Steve Reich filtered into *Different Trains*, his nostalgic cult piece for strings. Krása's music was widely performed before the war. His children's opera *Brundibár*—"Bumble- bee"—(recorded with stunning clarity by the Bambini di Praga on RR 1941) was actually filmed by the Nazis for their (unused) propaganda film. The extracts in Broughton's film make moving watching.

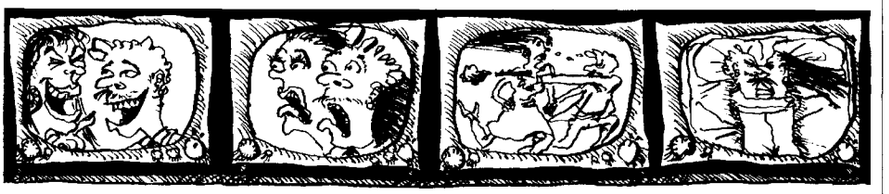
Not all of these were mature masterworks; some have a thinner, filmic quality, the feel of Paris or Hollywood. Yet, bolstered by hindsight, one soon realises these talented composers might have initiated movements themselves. But their influence was curtailed, their potential as teachers and theorists muzzled. Many of their pupils died with them. In music history, they remained a broken branch. At least, until now.

Yet we should not lose sight of another danger. This kind of thing goes on all the time, if in sanitised form. The postwar avant-garde fashion, underwritten by arts policy and broadcasting, smugly proscribed, even in Britain, a good deal of music we should be re-examining today. Some of it was stirred by just the influences one applauds in this vibrant central European music; and reflects a comparable talent.

In reviling the excesses of totalitarianism, we should ensure we don't invent our own brand of forgotten *Entartete Musik*.

*The Music of Terezín: Saturday, BBC 2 at 8.30. Joint broadcast concert, BBC2/R3: Sundat at 9.40. Music on R3: 5-8 October. "Burdibár" and "Der Kaiser von Atlantis" Queen Elizabeth Hall, Thurday, 7 October at 7.45. "Terezín: the Music" is recorded on Romantic Robot (Scott Butler) RR 1941: works by Viktor Ullmann, on Bayer BR 100 228. Channel Classics (CCS) has just issued a new series "Composers from Theresienstadt" and Koch International has just launched a nine-disc Terezín Music Anthology*

## JACI STEPHEN



# If it's sex and violence you want, don't watch Channel 4. For a real cracker, try Robbie Coltrane on ITV

It's ironic that Channel 4, which generally attracts more criticism about sex and violence on the screen than any other channel, has been broadcasting the tamest and best, schedules of all. Last Wednesday, we had *Inspector Morse*, *Mr Don and Mr George* and *LA Law*, and on Friday, *Cheers*, *Nurses*, *Paul Merton—the Series*, and *Eurotrash*.

Only the latter could be said to be mildly subversive, yet still the newspapers attempt to portray the channel as the main corrupter of mankind. One article last week claimed that Mary Whitehouse would be watching carefully on Friday night, where the most explicit sex ever to be seen on TV was allegedly going to be broadcast.

The programme is, in fact, "about Europe and trash", and is a glorious send-up of everything that is bizarre in European culture. Presented by Antoine de Caunes and Jean-Paul Gaultier, who make a great double act, it is funny rather than filthy. True, Jean-Paul had plenty to say on the subject of nipples and "ze pinniss", but the show was hardly the non-stop barrage of smut we had been led to expect (and secretly hoped for).

The controversial item featured a woman called Laetitia, an infamous French filmmaker who "produces, directs and sometimes participates" in amateur porn films. She has a mouth that has seen a lot of exercise, and does not look averse to seeing a lot more. "Do you want to play with yourself?" she asked one young woman who gazed lasciviously down the camera lens.

It was all rather disappointing. Despite the fact that Laetitia this year won an award at Cannes for Best Amateur Porn Film (hardly the Nobel Prize, is it?), she had the usual clichéd things to say on the subject of men: Italians do it too fast, Germans are too cold, and the French are well-hung. Somehow I don't think it was a reference to the guillotine.

If the Ban Violence on TV lobby (an even worse breed than the Ban Sex on TV mob) are tuning in to the beginning of the autumn drama schedules, they will find plenty to complain about. Over just 48 hours this week, we witnessed a stabbing on *Casualty* (BBC1, Saturday), a major accident with mashed up bodies on the motorway in *Harry* (BBC1, Saturday), and two stabbed women in the first episode of *Cracker* (ITV, Monday).

Not one of these incidents, however, could be said to have been an incitement to violence on the streets. *Casualty* is so packed with dead and bleeding bodies, another one on the wreckage passes without notice; *Harry* was simply boring; and *Cracker* was so well directed, and superbly acted by Robbie Coltrane as Fitz, the psychologist called in to assist in a murder inquiry, your only thought was how you were going to bear waiting another week for episode two.

Jimmy McGovern's intense and gripping script is not without its lighter moments, and the contrasting tone and pace of the writing (complemented by Michael Winterbottom's superb direction) create an atmosphere that is at one moment terrifying, another hilarious. Specially impressive was the forensic expert, called in to examine the bloodstains on the train where a woman was murdered. Pointing to the blood high up the carriage walls, he handed a camera to the policeman and asked: "Can you just get one of me pointing at it . . . something for the album?"

Naturally, it is Fitz who has all the best lines ("I've forgotten more about amnesia than they'll ever know"), and it is Coltrane's ability to bring both mania and gentleness to the part (McGovern wrote the part for him) that is the real strength in a production that is often strangely cast. The police, in particular are unmemorable, and so far are little more than caricatures of every policeman and woman we've ever seen. Even Barbara Flynn, the very talented actress of *A Very Peculiar Practice*, seems fairly one-dimensional. But it's early days, and these are small criticisms about what looks set to be one of the major hits of the season.

There was a welcome relief from the weekend's violence in *Screen One's Royal Celebration* (BBC1, Sunday), William Humble's hilarious and perfectly constructed drama set in one street on the day of Prince Charles' marriage to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981—"A more beautiful fairytale marriage it would be hard to imagine."

Knowing what we know now made for some of the funniest moments, both in terms of the marriage and social events. Walking up the aisle, Diana was taking "the longest and happiest of walks she's ever taken", said the TV commentator. Later, on the way to their honeymoon, the couple were escorted by Lieutenant Andrew Parker-Bowles: "So they're among friends as they ride along the Mall." Then there was Neil (Rupert Graves), getting back into the City after a spell of unemployment. "Safe as houses," he told Jim (Peter Howitt), advising him on an investment. "Chap at Lloyd's told me about it."

Even in retrospect, it still had to be a better bet than the Royal Marriage.



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**The way he was: John Peel in 1979 after he cut his hair. This and other photos some people might like to forget are all to be found in Ken Garner's "In Session Tonight—The Complete Radio 1 Recordings" (BBC Books, £17.99)—25 years of previously unreleased gems from the archives**

# The turn of the screw

**SEXING THE MILLENNIUM: A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION**
**Linda Grant**
HarperCollins, £12.99

*Sally Vincent*

This one's been lying about on the furniture for a couple of weeks now. My women friends see it, pick it up and put it down again, saying things like, "Oh shit!", as they reach for the ashtray. They disapprove of the grammar. "Sexing" doesn't mean anything; it's one of those made-up, noun-into-verb, catchpenny Americanisms. What's she supposed to have done, then? Dangled her old granny's wedding ring on a bit of string and watched it swing about over the moribund body of this old boiler of a decade to see what gender it is? And they look at the picture on the cover—a sort of Madonna costume-version of the womanskin of Greer's *Female Eunuch*—and say, "Huh, is this meant to be seminal or what?"

Such grumpiness is probably a form of ageism. My friends are all at least ten years older than Linda Grant's, not that it makes all that much difference. Hers asked her what she was writing about, and when she said the sexual revolution, they said, "Oh, has there been one?" This, coming from a thirtysomething career woman with a home, a partner, a nanny, a char and a nursery standing by for her first-born, must have been galling; but Grant had an answer. It was, she came to appreciate, a fairly smug and irrefutable litany. Have we not come a million miles and more in the past 30 years? Legalised abortion, legalised homosexuality, the Pill, easier divorce, a climate in which career and motherhood are no longer mutually exclusive, a whole new and wholly raunchy concept of female eroticism? What more do you want?

It is one thing to chart these victories, and Grant, obviously accustomed to making people laugh, has done so with a fastidious attention to detail. But it is quite another to persuade the victors of the sexual revolution that we're due for the big V E night fireworks display. And harder yet to disabuse us of the fact that, however political the personal was back in the 1960s, the personal somehow never actually *felt* particularly political.

Grant reminds us that what we had in the 1960s was a view of the attainability of Utopia based on a struggle against evils so blatant that we imagined their absence would make us, what? Happy? Sexually fulfilled? Mistresses of our own destiny? And then we found what revolutionaries have always found; there aren't enough Utopians to populate Utopia. "When they stopped believing," Grant writes amusingly, "they went on fucking." She might have left it there, except she was only on page six and still had another 283 to go. The right-wing backlash deplored the decline in moral values and we went on screwing. The porn-merchants gave us wall-to-wall filth and we poked merrily away. The plague years are upon us and we go on screwing. The only thing we resolutely do not wish to do is look to the future, except to hope forlornly that the end is nigh.

She reminds us, too, as though this was some kind of betrayal, that the great goddess Germaine now prefers to resume her knickers and an interest in gardening and her intellect. I am not entirely sure that I grasp the source of this bitterness, regardless of how many times I hear it expressed, but Grant seems to be of the opinion that anybody who defers at any level to the diminution of their oestrogen levels is, *per se*, a fascist. What I am sure of, however, is that it matters enormously.

Grant is candid and comprehensible when she expresses the earnest hope that her two years spent *Sexing the Millennium* would realise, within a catalogue of human perfidy and absurdity, something approaching good news; an anti-Cassandra prophesy, something to wake up for in the 21st century wearing an expectant leer and disease- and fool-proof contraception. Something, at any rate, to help us forget that in 1991 a collection of sexually wonderful wannabees attended a sex convention in San Diego. As part of their enlightenment programme, they were urged to write down what they most wanted to ask each other. The salient female question was "Why, when I try to get close to you, do you act like I'm trying to take something away from you?" What the men wanted to know from women was "How important is penis size?"

With role models like Madonna showing us what the sexual liberation of the rich and famous portends, by charging into the Size Nine Club in New York and measuring members' members to check they are really nine inches long, one is not seriously reassured of the cosy future of heterosexuality. "Pussy rules the world, but I have a dick in my brain," Madonna cries, for all the world as though Margaret Thatcher hadn't said it first.

Like saying "fuck" and "cunt" every five minutes—on the grounds that if women don't reinvent sexual language we're going to be stuck with the illiterate garbage men have stuck us with—it doesn't really cosy up the Procrustean bed on which we gamely stretch ourselves in the eternal quest for the big, personally and politically aggrandising O.

And yet I am glad to have met something of Linda Grant—whether it is her first lecherous twinges at the sight of Mick Jagger on *Ready Steady Go* or her burgeoning interest in female eroticism reaped from the work of such visionaries as Buñuel and Anaïs Nin. I like the even-handed, charming and self-mocking stance she takes to such matters. Yet I didn't ever twig where she might be coming from, or where she hoped to go, until she introduced



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the character of one Betty Dodson.

Betty Dodson is deliciously new to me. Apparently she was, and is, an American lady who improved the shining hours of the 1970s by running masturbation "workshops" for American women. Grant tells us, with neither rancour nor the hint of a sneer, that all manner of high-flying American feminists have confided that they are not entirely sure what an orgasm is. Having once attended a get-together of the staff of *Ms* magazine, I can confidently affirm that such haziness is as rife as it is amazing. What I didn't know was that someone called Betty Dodson made a career for herself of such innocuous innocence.

You might think that if somebody didn't know the taste of chocolate or the thrill of nicotine heat as it hits the back of your throat, it might be a kindess to leave them in the dark, but I wouldn't necessarily press the point.

However, Linda Grant departs from her usual mordant humour and take-it-or-leave-it approach to her own polemic, and reveals her total commitment to Betty Dodson as our hope for years to come. Apparently the old girl is now in her sixties and has lost her teeth. Undaunted by this biological let-down, she has been able to perfect the art of the blow-job. "This image of a woman still struggling to retain and affirm her sexuality is one I hope will go with us into the next millennium," Grant has written. I do wish she hadn't.

# Not so broad church

**THE CHURCH HESITANT, A PORTRAIT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND TODAY**
**Ysenda Maxtone Graham**
Hodder and Stoughton, £18.99
**THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND: A PORTRAIT**
**Michael De-la-Noy**
Simon and Schuster, £16.99

*Karen Armstrong*

We are constantly told that the Church of England is in crisis. Congregations are dwindling, its doctrines are under fire and the issue of the ordination of women seems to have split Anglicans into irreconcilably warring camps. A growing fundamentalism threatens the traditional tolerance of the Church, and it seems ever more irrelevant in our society, one of the most secular in the world.

Ysenda Maxtone Graham spent a year travelling round the country to assess the Anglican mood for *The Church Hesitant*. Disarmingly she admits that her account is subjective, arbitrary and ephemeral; thus it is difficult for an outsider like myself to see Graham as a reliable guide: she herself seems a mere tourist, exclaiming breathlessly at the various sights. Lunch at a convent is "riveting"; "après-service" (like "après-ski") makes her feel "fizzing". She is worried by the complexion of Christians, who, apparently, are all pale. Wary of charm in clergymen, Graham herself seems anxious to charm the reader by her conscious naiveté and determination to write in an unstuffy way.

Graham also looks askance at woolly thinking, but is sometimes guilty of this herself. She regularly escapes from a serious consideration of her subject into anecdote, and flits from one topic to another. Some of her remarks cry aloud for qualification. Why is prayer such a difficult and dispiriting experience for most Anglicans, when this is not the case with other religious traditions? How can Graham justly castigate some priests for the extremity of their teaching, when they are usually quoting Jesus who frequently made extravagant and paradoxical demands?

Since these questions are what the Church is ultimately about, it might have been better to devote more time to them, and less to the detailed accounts of what priests have for breakfast and feeble clerical jokes. Graham is neither funny nor interesting enough to make this kind of superficiality significant.

Nevertheless, she makes some valuable points. It is right that the public should be aware of the appalling attitude of ordinands at St Stephen's House, Oxford, who, after the Synod voted in favour of women priests, were observed picking up forks in the dining room and saying, "We might as well ordain this." Similarly, we should know about the vicar in the London diocese who refused to shake hands with one of his women deacons in case she was menstruating. And we should be apprised of the chilling fact that so many people signed an open letter to the *Church Times*, to protest against inter-faith meetings, that it needed a special supplement.

Michael De-la-Noy's *The Church of England: a portrait* is a more serious, if somewhat unexciting, study. Like Graham, he is disturbed by the rise of fundamentalism within the Anglican communion, which is no longer the broad, comprehensive church it used to be. Ambiguity of belief was once its hallmark and one of its major strengths: it was a tacit acknowledgement of the important fact that religious truth is not objective; unlike the discoveries unveiled by science, it cannot be the same for everybody.

Instead of adhering rigidly to established principle, the Church of England has shown a flexibility that seems astonishing to someone like myself, who is more familiar with the iron fist of Rome. In the Evangelical wing of the Church, however, the humble agnosticism of traditional Anglicanism is being replaced by a hard certainty that is all too quick to condemn the faith of others.

De-la-Noy is deeply perturbed by the unconscious racism of the Church: he points out that black people, who regularly attend Anglican services overseas, have found no spiritual home in the Church of England. After 30 years of employing black clergy, there is only one black archdeacon and one black bishop: Wilfred Wood, Bishop of Croyden, who has experienced at first hand the racism that he believes to be endemic in British society. "There is racism in the Church of England," Wood explains, "because English Anglicans see Christianity as the religious expression of national life and consciousness. The English think that they can claim to be Christian, but that they are at liberty to dislike Pakistanis."

The Church must consider this charge seriously if it is to minister effectively to the country after the victory of the British National party in Tower Hamlets. De-la-Noy is also concerned that the mission of the Church has been sidetracked by sex and gender issues: instead of dealing with homelessness and poverty, Anglicans are squabbling about the ordination of women, and crusading against homosexual clergymen.

Yet he concedes that the right-wing gutter-press has a good deal to answer for. In 1985, the Church published *Faith in the City*, a competent, rational critique of its performance in the inner cities. This is exactly the kind of issue the government and the national church should consider together but, at the behest of Margaret Thatcher, the press stigmatised the report as "pure Marxist theology".

De-la-Noy's conclusion that the Church has been hamstrung in its mission of compassion is harsh, since he has also presented us with a moving array of people who are trying creatively to make Christianity work. In St Botolph's in the City of London, the homeless and mentally ill pray alongside the merchant bankers who finance a day-care centre there. Yet this has to be set beside the apathy of the majority of Anglicans, who are unwilling even to contribute realistically to the support of their own clergy. Poorer parishes often give twice as much as wealthy ones.

If the Church of England is in crisis, this will be nothing new. Like any religious institution it has for centuries had to face the challenge of modernity. In the late 20th century, however, all the major religions worldwide are grappling with the encroaching power of secularism. All have responded in a remarkably uniform manner: with fundamentalism, new doctrinal and sexual intransigence and with racial and ethnic exclusiveness. If the hitherto tolerant Church of England is taking the same path, this is indeed a worrying prospect.

*Karen Armstrong is the author of "The End of Silence: women and priesthood" (Fourth Estate), published on 27 September*



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# Bits of rough

**VISITING MRS NABOKOV AND OTHER EXCURSIONS**
**Martin Amis**
Jonathan Cape, £15.99

*Chris Savage King*

Martin Amis excites hero-worship and resentment in equal measure. From male writers, this is often a symptom of wanting to be him. This new collection of journalism covers a range of subjects that include snooker, fiction and Martin Amis. Being female, I should, in Amis' view, be "less baffled and repelled" in making critical judgments. Here we go, then.

It wasn't his fault that he was born into the literati, and *Visiting Mrs Nabokov* abounds in literary gossip. When Burgess and Borges met, they chatted in Anglo-Saxon! Excuse me: what a pair of nellies. Here's Amis on Saul Bellow at a conference in Haifa: "He was in stalwart attendance . . . on the day I gave my paper . . . " Or Amis on his friendship with Salman Rushdie: "I often tell him that if the Rushdie Affair were, for instance, the Amis Affair . . . " How about Martin reporting from the set of *Robocop II*? "Here's cold proof of how hip and classy this outfit is: nearly everyone had read my stuff." Or scolding Polanski for miscasting *Tess*? "Polanski shrugged and disagreed, showing no more than mild disappointment."

Most writers have egos the size of Mount Sinai. Amis' ego and ambition have also been his tragedy. Paperback editions of his early work were plastered in the kind of covers that wouldn't have disgraced Jacqueline Susann's oeuvre, with prose inside to match. He was in that league, then.

*The Moronic Inferno* was less a comment on the US, perhaps, than a way of describing its author's inflamed consciousness. Still, in that earlier book, Amis surveyed Brian De Palma, Aids and Hugh Hefner, when finer British writers wouldn't touch them. He had fame, money, pussy galore. He was loved—yes, but not revered. Like the Krays, like Keith Talent in *London Fields*, he wanted *respect*. But not in Aretha Franklin's sense.

In 1984, *Money*—a trash classic—was passed over in that year's Booker Prize, along with Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*. Headmaster's end-of-term report: no refinement, no intellectual rigour. Frightfully smutty mind. Must try harder. *Time's Arrow* followed, eventually. Here was the big subject: the Holocaust! Here was the pointless technical virtuosity: writing it *backwards*. Amis was correct in his estimate of the Booker panel's solemn idiocy. *Time's Arrow* was duly shortlisted, but didn't win.

Still, wasn't Martin Amis—old rugged chops, literature's bit of rough—really one of us? In *Visiting Mrs Nabokov*, we see him as a rosy-cheeked youth attending Battersea Grammar School: "practically Broadmoor". He was saved from this ordeal only by being swept off to the West Indies for four months' film work. "How can they afford the five-star prices?" he cries now, surveying holiday-makers in St Lucia. "Are they all betting-shops nabobs or coin-op kings?" He is startled, on meeting the winner of the darts world championship, that the man isn't "half-drunk in some roadhouse, smothered in tattoos". He is astonished, in China, to discover a Watford player "on his way from the ballet to the opera".

In a more gallant mood, here's Martin Amis, girl-watcher, on "Tennis: the women's game": "*Dynasty* with balls, bright yellow fuzzy ones . . . " Or on topless sunbathing in Cannes: "I had never seen so many breasts in my life, and all nonchalantly bared to the breeze." His piece on Madonna is a soft lament for the time when sexual trickery was something men did to women—one-way traffic, apparently.

A young Amis prepares for a Stones concert by ordering up two girls, and sullenly equipping himself with earplugs. Add a mention of a "dusky bongoist" accompanying Charlie Watts, and you have the spit of whichever John Junor type fulminated against noisy yobbos way back in the sixties.

"I *can* read and write, and to a high stand-


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ard," he insists. And *Visiting Mrs Nabokov* has its share of cute phrases and observations. Trouble is, you have to wade through an awful lot of dated stuff, before you get to them. None of these articles is as good as his recent defence of Philip Larkin in the *Guardian*. Yet what was that about? More nostalgia for uglier times, when callow white men could be as sexist, racist or snobbish as they wished. The only response would be a wry chuckle over the brightness of the offence, and—with any luck—literary groupies would sink to their knees in breathless admiration. Outsiders were excluded, in the terms of this testimony, by having the wrong dinner jacket or liking naff songs.

In *Visiting Mrs Nabokov*, Amis and his chums drive themselves to hysteria, being clever-clever for its own sake. They form shifty poker schools, then "go home and sob in our wives' arms". Dear friends of Martin and "my father" are ceaselessly interviewed, but the only one he makes you want to read is V S Pritchett. Martin's head is still in the 1950s, and Amisland is a literary fantasy. Anyone who wants it is welcome to it. He seems less a hip, classy Mr Vain, and more like Hardy's Little Father Time.

I used to find Amis an entertaining writer. I found this collection pretty miserable. In the final straits, I had to buck myself up with active humour (Denis Leary's *No Cure for Cancer*), live fiction (Shena Mackay's *The Laughing Academy*), real literary criticism (D J Taylor's *After the War*) and a brilliant mind in top gear: Robert Hughes' *Culture of Complaint*. I'm thrilled they're repeating *Absolutely Fabulous*. I long for the TV *Buddha of Suburbia*. Contemporary culture isn't ugly; it's rich and beautiful. And none of it has anything to do with Martin Amis.

# Under the boardwalk

**THE TIME OUT BOOK OF LONDON SHORT STORIES**
**Maria Lexton (editor)**
Penguin, £5.99
**SMOKE SIGNALS: THE LONDON SHORT STORY COMPETITION**
**The London Arts Board (editor)**
Serpent's Tail, £7.99

*Mary Scott*

The contents page of the Penguin collection reads like a *Who's Who* of the capital's most glittering literati. All 25 stories were commissioned to mark the 25th anniversary of *Time Out*; the fascination lies in seeing what the set subject inspires in some of our best writers.

A rich exploration of the city's streets and buildings is the answer: and of their imaginative potential. The lovelorn protagonist of Julie Burchill's "A Map of the Heart" chauffeurs taciturn Marie around. Marie has a repertoire of silences; her "sex" silence—"She would stare past him aghast, with eyes like black ice"—is reserved for when the car passes a house in which she once made out. It's a neat expression of an equation common to the contributors to both books: built environment plus the emotional events that took place in it equals fiction's starting point.

But any place—metropolitan or rural—has the power to evoke memory. Few have London's capacity to invoke amnesia. The woman in Lisa Tuttle's "Turning Thirty" loses four years of her life through a chance encounter in a pub. Chance encounters are the stuff of the city; and, like Anne Billson's charismatic Charlie who recruits disciples in Leicester Square, they can change lives.

The sheer size of the metropolis permits people, as well as time, to be "lost": Charles Higson's pathetic Venetian strains to follow the red Central line on the tube map, but succeeds only in tracing the trail of blood from his wounded head, as other passengers scurry away.

London is indifferent. It is also tolerant of extreme eccentricity. What a joy is Nick Hornby's football fan camping on a north London roof in protest at Arsenal's poor performance; and Will Self's vision of the entire catering classes of the metropolis coming out of the closet as novelists.

London—even to its most jaded citizens—retains the capacity to surprise. And that capacity, these stories collectively suggest, has its roots in the mystery of London's past. That its *people* can have unknown histories is made only too clear in the story of how John McVicar's narrator became HIV positive. But history is in the buildings too. Kim Newman slips smoothly through the artifice of 1990s themed nightclubs into the "reality" of the rubble of the Blitz; and Adam Thorpe leaps forward into the drawing-rooms of a totalitarian city whose *mores* are the logical outcome of certain aspects of London today.

Logical, but not predictable. Those stories invite us to appreciate London as the non-mechanically minded do the motor car. It's a mystery, we haven't the foggiest how it works, but we know how to get about in it; and, goodness, it's powerful.

*Smoke Signals* is the outcome of a London Arts Board short-story competition. As might be expected from new writers, the contributions—with the exception of those from five commissioned pros—don't dazzle with quite the same consistency. But there are some real treats. And there's a fascinating extra theme: of what lies below the city's surface. Both collections contain tales of tube travel.

But several of these stories uncover an unexpected version of reality beneath that which their characters at first perceive. What exactly is the identity of Kate Pullinger's girl in a men's prison? Of Shena Mackay's Angelo? What are we to make of Patrick Cunningham's secretive folk who use the cpaital's salt bins as post boxes? Or of Kate Nivison's startling, subtle exposure of rats and racism? London is never quite what it seems.

# Banal Eden

**SCENES ORIGINATING IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN**
**Ann Oakley**
HarperCollins, £14.99

*Kirsty Milne*

The airport security officer was going through my bag with the brutal insouciance of the resentfully bored. But when she pulled out Ann Oakley's new novel, her face was transfigured. She waved the book in front of queueing travellers. "What's it like? I loved *The Men's Room*."

With *The Men's Room* (and a little help from the BBC), a distinguished feminist academic has become a popular novelist who brings airport searches to a halt. Personally, I found the book depressing, because it suggested that heterosexual partnerships are doomed to a perpetual cycle of failure, as women search for security and men for variety.

But *The Men's Room* did have a certain jaunty swing about it, tracing academic adultery through the 1980s. The new novel is a back-to-nature fertility fable, in which an Islington career woman (aged 39) moves to the country and discovers Motherhood. This theme is becoming horribly familiar. Last year, Sue Limb, who writes for the *Guardian* as "Dulce Domum", published a novel on very similar lines, (*Sheep's Eyes and Hogwash*). An example of this pernicious trend was the Hollywood film *Baby Boom*, which has city slicker Diane Keaton abandoning Manhattan to foster a child in the country.

The good thing about this flight-to-the-farmyard genre is its comic potential, as the ignorant townee is confronted by rural realities. Oakley's heroine (called Flora, perhaps in honour of *Cold Comfort Farm*) has to cope with defective rural plumbing, castrated sheep, and neighbours who turn out to be software engineers relocated from London. Her reward is a sensitive rural hunk, an organic farmer who subscribes to *Marxism Today* (and is now, therefore, presumably a subscriber to the *NSS*).

Inevitably, their relationship is described as "deeply animalistic". Here's the rub. The cartoon *Cold Comfort Farm* style collides awkwardly with straight psychological realism and passages of purple prose (Oakley gets particularly carried away by the flowers in Flora's garden). But it can be hard to determine whether we are in serious or in skittish mode—as when, for example, we hear that Flora has thrown away her bras "after seeing the udders of sheep and cows hanging free. It had seemed unfair to tie up her own after that." Sincerely meant, or tongue-in-cheek?

Oakley, usually a thoughtful writer, seems to have taken her eye off the ball; cliché, whether inadvertent or intentional, dogs her style. Children cry from "rosy infant lungs". Ordinary trips to the shops are rhetorically equated with life choices. "Flora drives off. But where, really, is she going?"



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The novel is distended by the inclusion of characters who are relevant only because they live in the village or suffer from the mysterious infertility afflicting local women. But what's most disappointing is the banal conservatism of the basic premise: back to nature, back to motherhood, and getting back in touch with Life. Give me urban adultery any day.

# Rosy dollars

**TINA MODOTTI: A FRAGILE LIFE**
**Mildred Constantine**
Bloomsbury, £16.99
**TINA MODOTTI: PHOTOGRAPHER AND REVOLUTIONARY**
**Margaret Hooks**
Pandora, £25

*Amanda Hopkinson*

Tina Modotti is an eminently marketable commodity. When film-makers and publishers—or, even more often, their publicists—discuss rehabilitating a neglected artist, it's strictly a commercial crusade that's being undertaken. Lest the point be overlooked by some mad fool rushing to admire the work for its own sake, the seriousness with which we, the viewers and readers, should approach it is headlined in every publicity shot with the two-year-old "news" that Modotti's *Roses* sold at auction for $165,000. And lest we should chance to pass over this barrage of spurious validation as junk advertising, Margaret Hooks opens her introduction by repeating the *Roses* story, thereby setting the tone of her book in foregrounding her subject's eminent saleability.

In short, Modotti is receiving precisely the same hype as her compatriot artist—Frida Kahlo—did a few years ago, and will doubtless not tarry too long before receiving the ultimate accolade of being collected by Madonna. Simplifications are tempting; and the fact that two Mexican women artists of European immigrant parents, who knew one another, shared much of the same company and lifestyle, the same political and artistic interests, is rendered of less significance than the romantic notion of woman/artist-as-victim—of men and of circumstances—"unfulfilled" through maternity, allowing sublimation to become sublime via artistic perfection.

In fact, of course, Modotti is in little need of "rehabilitation", having rarely been out of the eye of the interested during her working life (principally 1923-30) or since her death in 1942. Given her shows at the San Francisco Museum of Art, at the New York Museum of Modern Art, in Europe, Latin America and Japan since the late 1970s, her work has been eminently viewable—and written about. Indeed, the best literature still available appeared at the time of the major exhibition to celebrate 150 Years of Mexican Photography at the Fine Arts Museum in Mexico City in 1989, and at the International Festival of Photography at Arles in 1991, both because they permitted a vivid portrait of the artist to emerge through excellent reproductions of her own work and words—and those of her contemporaries.

It is therefore all the more depressing that the work to be shown at London's Photographer's Gallery is so specifically geared to a dealers' market (20 portfolios of 15 prints, retailing at £13,500), and never more so than when we remind ourselves that this proletarian girl from Udine, who immigrated as a factory seamstress to the US, lived and died in poverty, devoting a major part of her life to international socialism.

Artists' biographies, of course, involve still another element, namely the author's ability to keep her voice down in order to allow the artist to speak all the more clearly. In this, Mildred Constantine (her book first appeared in 1975) succeeds the best, contextualising the mass of informative quotes—fortunately for us, Modotti was a copious and animated correspondent—and laying out the images in a manner that allows us to enjoy their range as well as their profundity.

Constantine's own background as an exhibitions curator, acquainted with Modotti's work since the 1930s, here stands her in good stead. Here is Modotti's fascination with the geometric obsessions of the Secessionist movement, the flights of stairs and flanked walls; the serried arches of a convent interior and ringed rims of gathered glasses; the lilies and telegraph wires that allowed the eternal and modern equal rights to formal beauty, alternating with sections of personal portraits and political propaganda. In the prolific selection of portraits painted and taken of her by the best-known artists of her international circle, one sees the prototype of the myth: movingly beautiful, seductively posed, the incarnation of tragic romanticism.

Margaret Hooks' version takes its title from Vittorio Vidali's monograph, research material from Elena Poniatowska's forthcoming *Tinisima*, and draws heavily on Constantine's text. It also alludes to much about Modotti's life that was *not* devoted to photography. These include her early years struggling to support her mother and younger siblings in conditions of near-starvation and winter hypothermia, and her later years as a Communist Party activist, being expelled from Mexico in 1930 to travel and campaign in Germany, the Soviet Union and Spain. Despite a brief spell with the Unionfoto GmbH in Berlin, where she felt channelled towards a "reportage" that was not her style—ironic, really, since it was that which was most unabiguously suited to communist propaganda—Modotti never regained her original mastery of the medium she had made so much her own in the 1920s.

In all, the eternal conflict between Art and Life that so preoccupied Modotti had, she felt, to be resolved in favour of the latter. It is, however, her art that remains to inspire awe and fascination in the rest of us, a far more appropriate calibrator of their "value" than a £15,000 price-tag.

## PRINTOUT

# Chain gang

*Boyd Tonkin*

**The Booker Prize baffles other arts sponsors. Here's a vast multinational whose long-term commitment to literary fiction does wonders for the novels and nothing for knowledge of the donor. Who cares what the firm produces? Perhaps the agribusiness corporation likes it that way, for Booker has not been smelling all that sweet this year. One subsidiary has been embroiled in a dispute at a Yorkshire mushroom plant. US profits, meanwhile, have plunged because Booker chickens don't yield enough white meat to please the American consumer.**

**It's all a far cry fom gala dinners at the Guildhall—save in one respect. Before the company diversified, much of its revenue derived from West Indian sugar. And Booker juries have revealed a fondness for novels that reflect on the slave trade, without which cash-crop plantations would never have come to the Caribbean. A Freudian would call it the return of the repressed.**

**After Barry Unsworth shared the 1992 prize with "Sacred Hunger", this year's shortlisted slaver is Caryl Phillips' "Crossing the River". Phillips' novel, which Lucasta Miller in NSS found "nuanced, humane and sympathetic", mixes a narrative of the "middle passage" with stories that explore the enduring legacy of African diaspora. The question of what a slaving inheritance can mean today agitates writers, critics and even a few politicians in Britain. This month, Verso publishes Paul Gilroy's "The Black Atlantic": his argument for a black identity that draws strength from each axis of the old slave triangle. And in Liverpool and Bristol, the city authorities have at last planned permanent memorials to the human traffic that first founded their wealth.**

**Historians can inspect the English breakfast table and tick off its imperial residues, from the tea in the pot to the sugar in the marmalade. Much more troubling is the idea that our precious rhetoric of liberty has depended on the exclusion of outsider groups. The BNP in Millwall knows very well that you can cherish democracy but wish to limit its beneficiaries. So did the classical Greeks, of course: Paul Cartledge's sharp and unsentimental new introduction to their mentality ("The Greeks"; Oxford University Press, £7.99) forcefully shows that freedom-loving citizens could live at ease among hordes of slaves.**

**British trade and empire throve for centuries on this paradox. But it seldom found its way into fiction: students always fret over Jane Austen's casual dismissal of the West Indian origins of the Bertrams' wealth in "Mansfield Park". Now it does, with rising frequency. We can expect more piquant reminders of our home-grown holocaust from future Booker juries.**



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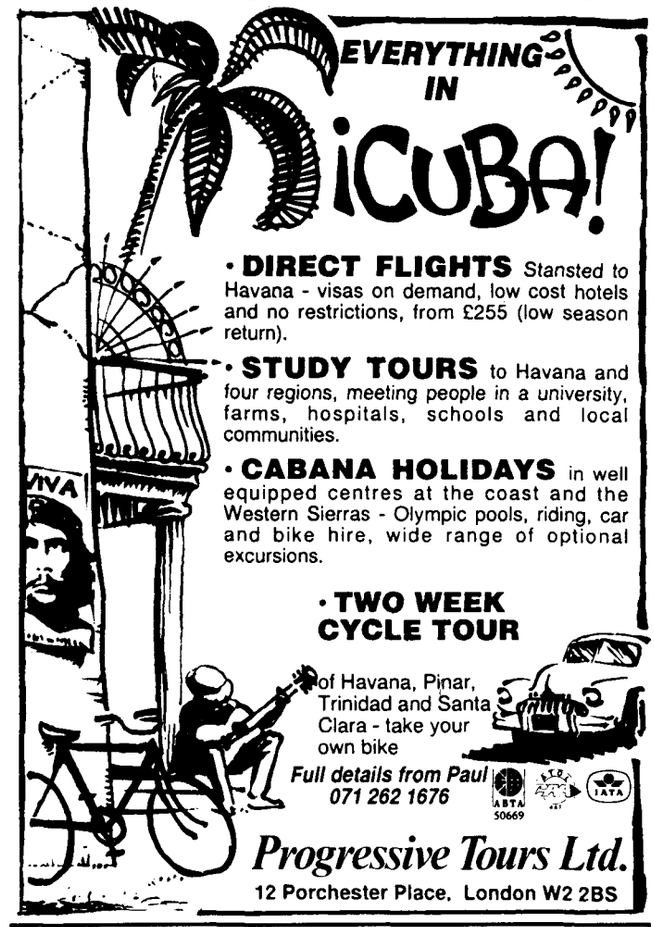
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**For further details please contact: Bridget Baker, Schumacher Society, Ford House, Hartland, Bideford, Devon, EX39 6EE. Tel: 0237-441621, Fax: 0237-441203.**

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# ENDGAMES: Weekend Competition

**No 3296 Set by Russell Lucas**
We asked for excerpts from the Queen's Speech as drafted by a stylist of your choice.

**Report by Ms de Meaner**
I'm afraid I forgot to give a word length, which various compers took me to task over. I was, however, rather put out by Basil Ransome-Davies' instruction to pull my socks up for not saying whether this was the Queen's Speech or her Christmas Message. Actually, I *did* say.

There were a number of excellent entries, although the Big Question was whether Willie Hamilton MP counted as "a stylist". I rather thought not, but here's George Cowley's entry: "I am a parasite on society, a cancer on the fair body of England; therefore I abdicate here and now." £12 to the winners.

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My government . . . when I say "My government", it is not as I say "my spectacles", the spectacles lodged upon my nose, nor as I say "my husband", the man to whom I am conjoined in holy matrimony, nor as I say "my country", the country in which I have the privilege of having been born, nurtured and honoured to be crowned its rightful queen. My government, I say, this body of persons who act in my name . . . but what is the best government? is a question debated by philosophers from the time of Plato and indeed long before that, I have no doubt ("A free government," says the revered Edmund Burke, "is, for practical purpose, what the people think so", and likewise the learned Joseph de Maistre opined, in his "Lettres et Opuscules Inédits", "Toute nation a le gouvernement qu'elle mérite") . . . my government, then, this body of persons chosen, elected, persuaded, commanded or willingly desirous of occupying the offices of state, this government thought by the people to be free, deserved by the people . . . my government, in short, proposes . . . (Sterne)

**John Marriott**

My government will—it's a great big strong one—bring foward a bill—it may be a long one—to deal with snails and dolphins and whales, and quinces and quails and petticoat tails.

My ministers—whoops! the minister's name, you know, is Alice—can't find the troops for changing guard at Buckingham Palace, which is rather hard on the present guard—they'll be so tired, and they're *so* admired.

Members of the House of Commons: a mouse, my ministers see, has eaten the key to budget proposals allowing disposals of food reserves, as Pooh observes.

My government knows, tiddely-pom, how much it owes, tiddely-pom, how much this goes, tiddely-pom, on growing. Three cheers for Me! It's time for tea. (A A Milne)

**David Heaton**

To speak of my ministers having plans for the coming term is to do them an injustice. There is nothing as vulgar as a sense of direction discernible in what they propose. Indeed, were it not difficult to carry a large handbag while manoeuvering in a long frock, I would have felt impelled to bring my diary. Reading you extracts from that would prove infinitely more amusing and much more sensational than what I have here.

One cannot, however, expect both to do one's duty and to be amused. That idea, I'm afraid, is responsible for the worst excesses of the modern trend to careers guidance, and a sad abuse of position in respectable society.

Let me, then, be brief. My government intends to privatise that which is not yet privatised, provided it has first been stripped of any conceivable value. Thus coal mines and railways will fade away. And, one hopes, with them will die those indelicate notions they have fostered, such as brotherhood, saver-tickets and, such a damaging thought for the propertied classes, the idea of *left*-luggage.

My government will also continue to ensure that my people pay. They will impose VAT on fuel and terminal financial restraints on the NHS; the DHSS and any other alphabetical assemblage that helps those in trouble. Thus the rich will continue to grow richer, the poor poorer and the sick sicker; but the old will grow no older, unless they are very rich like one's self and one's mother . . . (Wilde)

**M E Ault**

My government will govern. And it is good that it should do this, for of all the things that governments can do this is the best and the most appropriate. It will be a wise government, governing with wisdom. The wisdom with which it will govern will be shown in the legislation that it will introduce. There will be a Rail Privatisation Bill. This bill concerns the railways, and it concerns too their privatisation. They are at present under state control, and it is this control of the railways by the state that the legislation to be introduced by my government will change. No longer will it be said that a man, journeying to see his *inamorata* on the 6.15 from Paddington, is a passive recipient of state subsidies, without *cojones*. Henceforth, the price of his ticket will be determined by market forces, and his sense of manhood will be much increased thereby, and the woman he loves in his heart will feel this also. I have heard all these things from Mr Major, who does not lack *cojones*, and therefore I believe them to be true. (Hemingway)

**Peter Norman**

## GRYPH'S QUIZ

**The answers all have something in common**

1. Baker's popular classics
2. Segmented carnivore
3. Retirement position
4. Anglo-French conflict
5. 50.8 kg
6. Where Wol lived
7. Cricketing achievement
8. Entirely
9. The military
10. Roman tank officer?

**Answers below**

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**No 3299 Set by Margaret Rogers**
Most proverbs have a dated air. Could we have some up-to-date ones by 14 October. As many tries as you like.

**Quiz answers**
*As this is the 100th Cryptic Quiz in the series to appear in the "NSS", all solutions feature a reference to 100: 1) Your Hundred Best Tunes; 2) Centipede; 3) Chiltern Hundreds; 4) 'Hundred Years' War; 5) Hundredweight; 6) Hundred-acre Wood; 7) Century; 8) 100 per cent; 9) Haydn's Symphony No 100; 10) Centurion. Notes: 1) Radio 4 programme presented by Richard Baker; 6) A A Milne*



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# CITIZENS INCOME & THE LEFT

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**10.00am**

**Saturday 9 October 1993**

**School of Oriental and African Studies**
Thornhaugh Street
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This conference aims to examine the relevance of Citizens Income (CI) for a new left agenda. Sessions will include CI and the Labour Party, CI for beginners, citizenship, the Unions, market socialism, CI and the minimum wage, green politics and the history of the idea.

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**Len Doyal**
**Ursula Huws**
**Kate Soper**
**John Chowcatt (MSF)**
**Chris Pond (Director, Low Pay Unit)**
**and many more**

Registration fee:
£4.50 (concs £2.00)

The registration fee covers a comprehensive pack of conference papers as well as a beginner's guide to the CI debate

Please let us know if you need childcare facilities

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**Tel 071-700 3853**


# SALAMANCA: Sponsored by HarperCollins

**Salamanca 200: "From All Angles"**

Unclued answers must mostly be deduced and unchecked letters in their entries may be found AMONG BLUE. Clues and entries are normal, but in 17 of them one letter *in the secondary clueing* has been misprinted, visibly or otherwise, although the correct form must be entered. These rogue letters taken in clue order spell out an alternative title for the puzzle, and solvers should also answer this in the space provided below the grid. (17 is given in Collins as a suffix.)

Copies of the Collins Concise English Dictionary for the first three correct entries opened. Entries to Salamanca 200, New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by Monday 11 October.

**ACROSS**

11 Alkaloid derived from rue seeds that remain hot when cooked (7)
13 Shakespeare's changeling's ugly pout (4)
14 Hit out with palm (3)
15 Person from Germany—one swiftly taking a direct route? (8)
16 Small creature—foal, possibly (4)
18 Piece of ground that's old, found among squalid dwellings (5)
19 Brisk dance, a blend of Euro, Eastern and British pieces? (7)
23 Mythical King, could be Gog? Yes (6)
25 One's dead, decomposed—smelled! (5)
29 Soft animal furs reversed shrivel up (6)
30 The one Jupiter seduced found dead in the field? (4)
32 Are, like riddles, not so watertight? (7)
33 Such a hire-purchase system is dated, abandoned (5)
35 Loads of little kids (4)
37 Glazing paintings to improve art value (8)
39 The working labourer? (3)
41 I make sugary stuff (that's recipe for covering top of cake) (4)
42 Tinker who worked at a company with one (7)

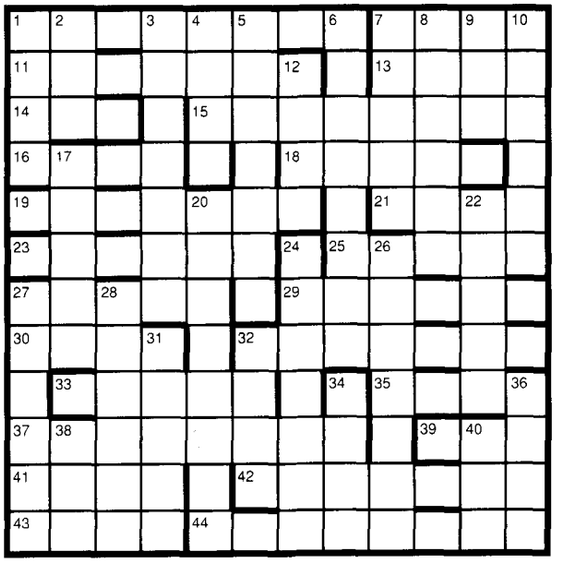
**DOWN**

2 It's played by shepherd, one in old books (3)
3 It makes mart with English tricky affair? (7)
5 Identity of person (head) (7)
7 One cuts logs perhaps—works hard (5)
8 Approaches *purson*? That *can't* be right! (6)
9 Start on exercises? (3)
10 Fibre, a source of danger? (6)
12 Language, by no means totally universal? (4)
17 Part of discourse we found on record (5)
20 Boat shows? They could be as great and time consuming (8)
22 Royal cubit, king's morning measure (5)
24 One that's created misery (— for Reynard?) (7)
27 Drinks like a fish? (6)
31 Months spent in the radar section (5)
32 See posh duke being obtrusive and showy (4)
38 Monetary unit, European copper (3)
40 What golfer uses with ball, say, as centre. *Head* of golf-club has one? (3)

**Prizewinners for Salamanca 198**

**Dr & Mrs Bell, Hampton, Middx**
**C J Brougham, London W8**
**A N E R Blewitt, Norfolk**

**Solution to Salamanca 198**
**The Address was 221B Baker Street**



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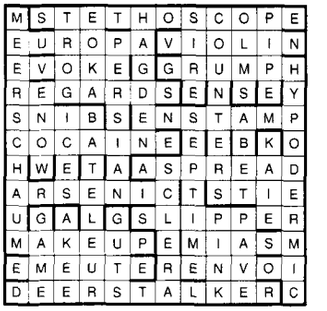

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# BACKCHAT

## **Mat Coward** asks why Paddy Ashdown thinks she should be our Great Leader

The great court of world opinion is kind enough to acknowledge me as something of an unrivalled expert on the subject of liberal trash and the vile meanderings of the diseased centrist mind. In order to assist those who do not have the benefit of my insight, here is a selection of the questions I am most often asked, along with my invariably illuminating replies.

Question: Isn't it lucky that liberal hero-in-chief, Boris Yeltsin, is a democrat? I mean, it would be terrifying, wouldn't it, if the man who has seized total power in one of the world's largest countries, has torn up its constitution and blown his vast nose on it, had been, instead, a person of dictatorial tendencies? I mean, wouldn't it? *Answer: Yes.*

Question: I read with astonishment, only a fortnight ago, the following words in a leading liberal weekly: "The idea that the Lib Dems might prop up the Tories for a fifth term in government is laughable." Tell me, has everyone in Britain except me—and, of course, yourself—really forgotten that the only reason we have a Tory government today is because the Lib Dems voted to keep it in office in last year's Maastricht confidence motion?

*Answer: No, they haven't really forgotten—but, by god, they're trying to.*

Question: Why do limperals talk endlessly about "the death of communism" or "the post-communist era", while half the population of the world still lives in communist countries?

*Answer: What these types mean, of course, is that there are no white communists left, only chinkies and spics and the like, who don't count. See also "Why are limperals such enthusiastic supporters of the racially purified Euro Super-state, and why do they think that makes them internationalists?"*

Question: Am I, by any chance, right in thinking that while centrist fools continue their adoration of Paddy Ashdown, the famous democrat, Paddy herself is in fact plotting to become Britain's Boris Yeltsin, and yearns to be known not as Prime Minister, as she claims, but as Great Leader, and to head a national coalition government that would include up to a third of non-elected cabinet ministers, ie, a government modelled on Mussolinist lines?

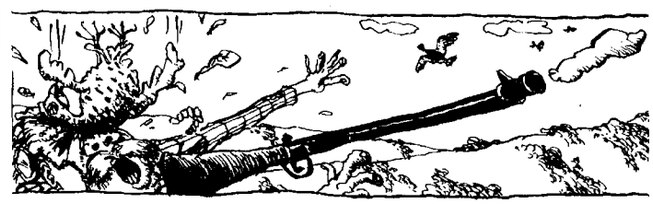
And am I also right in thinking that the post-Nazi East End entryists into the SLD in the 1980s, eventually left that party because they found it too authoritarian in outlook? *Answer: Yes, funnily enough you are.*

Question: Can you settle an argument, please? *Answer: Yes, I can.* Question: It's like this, see. My friend says that once Labour is a truly centrist party, millions of people who currently vote Liberal will vote Labour instead. But I say, isn't it a bit significant that no centrist party has won more than a fraction of the votes in any general election for generations; which of us is right? *Answer: your friend is an idiot.*

Question: Why oh why, pray tell, does the decadent liberal press give so much uncritical attention every year to the Booker Prize for Boredom, when a) Nobody, except critics and prize judges, has ever read any book that has ever appeared on the Booker list; b) Books have to be very, very bad, I mean even worse than most non-genre novels, before they're even allowed to apply to be considered for the Booker shortlist; and, c) The company that runs the Booker is involved in one of the most disgraceful industrial disputes of recent years?

*Answer: Because they are all liberal trash, that's why, and they all belong in mass psychiatric refurbishment clinics in the frozen wastes of Cumbria. Got it?*

# FORTEANA



## If you want to try to lose your cat, advises **Paul Sieveking**, don't bother

Cats have the most phenomenal homing instinct. Last year, I trawled the Fortean archive and found more than 30 cases of cats making their way home, covering distances of over 75 miles. The most puzzling of these were cases where cats found their human associates after the latter had moved house. A New York vet left his cat behind when he took up a new post in California 2,500 miles away. Months later, the cat appeared. The vet was almost certain it *was* the same cat: on its fourth tail vertebra was a deformed bone growth that had marked his original cat as a result of a bite.

Cats often make the news as adventurous stowaways. A black tom from Zimbabwe airport made a surprise appearance in a Boeing 767 at 30,000 feet at the end of August this year. It clambered out from the rudder pedal slot, between the legs of the first officer, and jumped on his lap, giving him the fright of his life. It escaped back into the space below the flight deck, and it took 12 hours to catch it at Gatwick.

In June, a black-and-white moggie crept inside an empty bourbon barrel in Louisville, Kentucky, and was hoisted on board a cargo vessel bound for Scotland. During the 30-days' crossing, the cat survived by licking the whisky dregs. When she staggered out at Chivas Brothers distillery in Keith, Grampian, she was nursing a titanic hangover. Though weak and disoriented, she tried to make for the hills, but was soon caught in a trap. The workers named her Whisky and the company offered to pay for her six-months' quarantine. She should be free to settle in some Scottish home just before Christmas.

Felix, a four-year-old female tortoiseshell, was found jet lagged and starving in a Pan Am 747 jumbo jet at Heathrow on New Year's Day 1988. Her owners were traced to Los Angeles. William and Janice Kubecki and Felix had boarded the plane in Frankfurt, West Germany, on 3 December, bound for America.

On arrival, Felix's basket was empty, and it was assumed she had scampered off into the sunshine; but she was still in the hold, where she remained for 29 days, making 64 flights over three continents, touching down in 19 cities and clocking up about 180,000 miles, the equivalent of seven global laps. She survived by lapping condensation from the hold's walls and was near death when rescued. An air hostess organised the collection of £700 quarantine fees and accompanied Felix back to America, travelling first class, on 21 January.

A Siamese cat called Lucky spent even longer in a Pan Am baggage hold back in 1979. The two-year-old cat went around the world 20 times in 32 days, and was barely alive when discovered in Heathrow. The journey had begun on Guam on 9 October on a Miami-bound flight. Curiously, another Siamese cat had stowed away on a plane in Guam eight months earlier. It was thought that Wanton Bacon (identified by a collar tag) had boarded the flight on its own and changed planes at Washington. Wanton was discovered on a Pan Am plane at Heathrow.

Perhaps the greatest feline flyer was Hamlet, a black-and-white cat who escaped from his basket on a flight from Toronto to London and spent the next six weeks travelling 25 times around the world, before being discovered in April 1984 during a routine maintenance check at —you guessed it—Heathrow.

Cats can survive for quite a long time without sustenance. In 1990, a black cat spent 48 days sealed up in a metal cargo crate travelling from Tilbury to Adelaide. Dockers found a bundle of bones and fur, but the year-old cat—named Mercedes after the car she shared the container with—made a complete recovery in quarantine.

Not all the tales have a happy ending. This June, a moggy that stowed away to Coventry in a tractor tyre on a lorry from Morocco was put down by health inspectors who feared that it might be rabid. It's a cat's life.

*Paul Sieveking is editor of "Fortean Times"*

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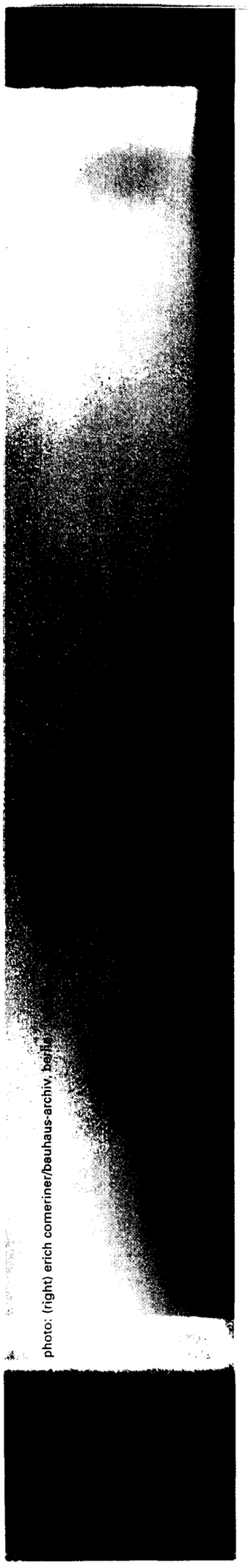

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